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WESTERN AMERICANA

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June 24 [illegible]

ORIGIN

OF THE

Free Public Schools

OF

SAN FRANCISCO;

EMBRACING

THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE BOARD
OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY AND COUNTY
OF SAN FRANCISCO.

WITH LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS RELATIVE THERETO.

PARTS I AND II.

SAN FRANCISCO:
PRINTED BY VANDALL, CARR & CO.
No. [illegible] Clay Street.
1865.

Testimony of Early Residents.

San Francisco, June, 1864.

Gentlemen of Common School Committee:

We, the undersigned, are sure, of our own knowledge, that the credit of establishing the first Public School in San Francisco, is due to John C. Pelton.

FERDINAND VASSAULT.
J. C. DUNCAN.
N. PROCTOR SMITH.
D. H. HASKELL.
J. W. SULLIVAN.
JAMES FLOOD.
JOHN SHORT, Sr.
Wm. HAMELL.
J. E. DAVIS.
FRANK WHEELER.
NATHANIEL PAGE.
Wm. L. DUNCAN.
JOHN J. HALEY.
Wm. MITCHELL.
A. J. BOWIE, M. D.
G. G. HAYDEN.
RICHARD TOBIN.
Wm. NORRIS.
J. T. WALSH.
DAVID HUDSON.
CHAS. L. KELLOG.
JAS. B. CARTER.
M. S. BUCKELEW, '49er.
G. W. BRYANT, '49er.
CAPT. Wm. HINCKLEY, '47er.
CHAS. T. STUMCKE, '49er.
J. C. BELL. '49er.
Wm. CLAPP, '49er.
J. G. GARDINER, '49er.
Wm. SHEAR, '49e..
L. L. BLOOD, '49er.
JOSHUA J. CRERY, '49er.
S. SHEPPARD, '49er.
Wm. L. BURLING, '49er.
PHILO WHITE. 49er.
J. J. BIRDGE, 49er.
J. A. RISDEN.
J. S. VAN WINKLE.
G. I. N. MONELL.
M. FENNELL.
H. B. PLATT, '49er.
E. H. LEONARD, '49er.
C. B. GRANT.
GEO. M. NORTON.
ex-Alderman.

I have been a resident of this city since July 1849. I never heard of any other person [than Mr. Pelton] mentioned in early days, in connection with the establishment of our Public Schools.

A. D. MERRIFIELD.

I have resided in this city since 1847—with the exception of the period between May, 1847, and May, 1849.

ALEX. G. ABELL.

I agree with the above, and would further state, that I repeatedly visited the Public School in 1849. At that time, it was notorious that to Mr. Pelton was due the honor of being the first to inaugurate the Public Schools in San Francisco.

J. H. STILL.

Capt. E. A. POOLE.
JAMES BOWMAN,
[Sec'y to Mayor Geary, 1850.]
Dr. GALEN BURDELL,
[Forty-niner.]
T. C. McCALLUM,
[Resident since 1850.]
D. S. DIKEMAN.
G. W. CONKLIN, Pioneer.
B. F. HILLIARD,
Formerly of Herald newspaper.
M. D. BORUCK.
[Editor Spirit of the Times.]
F. H. WELLS.

I concur in the above.

HALL McALLISTER.
H. M. NAGLEE.

From general knowledge, I approve of the above.

J. W. BINGHAM.
O. P. SUTTON.
JOHN SHEPHEARD.
MAJ. JNO. STRATMAAN.
T. T. POST, '47er.
H. R. CLARK. 49er.
C. H. ELLIS, '46er.
J. L. BACHELDER.
E. J. CHASE.
GEORGE N. GRANT.
E. J. CHASE,
C, P. DUANE.

Pelton, John Cotton

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SAN FRANCISCO;

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THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE BOARD
OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY AND COUNTY
OF SAN FRANCISCO.

WITH ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS.

SAN FRANCISCO:
PRINTED BY VANDALL, CARR & CO.
No. 410 Clay Street.
1865.

San Francisco, March 8th, 1865.

J. C. Pelton, Esq.:

Dear Sir,—We have read the proof sheets of the plamphlet entitled "Origin of the Public Free Schools of San Francisco, embracing the report of the Committee appointed by the Board of Education" of this city, and other miscellaneous documents pertaining thereto, and as said Committee we hereby approve and indorse the publication.

Wm. G. BADGER,
JOHN F. POPE,
WASHINGTON AYER,
Committee on Origin of Common Schools.

ERRATA.

On page 10, for "Benj. B. Colt, M. D.," read Benj. B. Coyt, M. D.

On page 28, for "C. M. K. Spaulding," read C. M. K. Paulison, Member of the First Board of Aldermen.

On outer page of cover, for "Dan Louderback," read Davis Louderback, Attorney in Police Court.

On page 21, note with * should read—Mr. Tait arrived in San Francisco in ☞ 1853.

On page 122, in fifteenth line from top, insert "are" after the word "which."

Note.—Pages 31 and 32 will be found repeated in this pamphlet, in consequence of its having been published in several distinct parts. The Letter of Mr. Nevins is also repeated, for the same reason.

PREFACE.

I SINCERELY regret those circumstances which have heretofore, and more especially of late, given rise to discussion in regard to my connection with the early history of the Free Public Schools of this city; and were I not urged by grave reasons, would not engage in a personal participation in that discussion; and should feel that I now owed an apology to my friends and the community for doing so. But those reasons do exist; and they will, I am confident, be considered quite sufficient by all who will thoughtfully reflect, and for one moment *make the case their own.*

As will be learned by those who read the following pages, I arrived in California in the autumn of 1849. It will be observed, that I came in *accordance with the desires and purposes of my earlier life.* On my arrival, by the coöperation of friends, except for whose assistance I might have failed, I was enabled to consummate my purpose, in the establishment of a Free Public School, much sooner than might have been expected, considering the unsettled condition of San Francisco society at that early day. In this connection, I never claimed to have conceived and constructed, and put in operation in the city and State, an original School System; for want of population, none at that period was necessary or possible. I sought, rather, to transplant from the Atlantic States, the *idea* and love of the institution of Free Common Schools—as cherished there. In this design and object, which I thought laudable, I was successful; at whatever cost of time, money and effort on my part, I leave others, familiar with those pioneer days, to judge for themselves. For all this, *I* had that one consolation of success, *and* the consciousness of having been a faithful *pioneer* in the early organization of society in this city and State, the adopted home of myself and my family. I had, too, the gratification of knowing that friends at home and here, who had watched my undertaking with deep interest, but some doubt, had witnessed or learned of its accomplishment, and also rejoiced with me in the success of my enterprise.

With these reflections, I have always been satisfied for my humble agency in the *pioneer* Free Common School movement. Glory, fame, honor, special credit, or fortune, I never claimed or expected; much less were anticipated, those unpleasant experiences which seem to have been reserved for me.

Scarcely had my early success been realized when, to meet the rapidly increasing demands of the city, a certain new movement became necessary in School affairs, and this new movement was made the means and occasion for ignoring and studiously blotting from the record all that had preceded—all that my patient and hopeful efforts and struggles had accomplished in more than the two preceding years. [See Index, p. 2, article from the *San Francisco Whig*, 1852.] Nor have those attempts to override and crush out ever ceased. On the contrary, they have been renewed in various ways, and on many occasions; and it will be seen, that innocent parties have frequently been made the unwitting instruments of this wrong. [See Index, p. 2.] And these insidious efforts at wiping out, with seeming design, have been aimed, not alone at the early history and record of the humble origin of the Free Public School system of San Francisco, but also against the *originator*. During more than twelve years he has felt these selfish, cruel goadings, till his heart has often sickened and his spirit and courage almost failed; but those silent, yet persistent and unrelenting assaults, have at last culminated, having borne their fruit and accomplished their object. I am broken down and removed from the Public School Department to which I gave its first life; and, almost *simultaneously*[*] with this great wrong, a certain monumental inscription is carefully prepared, which, with great apparent grace, consummates the long-desired and unceasingly-sought object — my complete and final entombment. An utter falsification of the truth in the Records[†] of the School Department, from time to time, have rendered this last act consistent and logical, as it has been easy of accomplishment.

Under these circumstances, I feel that I should not be true to myself and faithful to those who share in whatever interests me and affects my name, if I did not now expose the falsity and injustice of those wrongs of which I complain. That epitaph,[‡] which has called forth this pamphlet, is the crowning act—the finishing touch—the "last feather" under which I cannot remain silent: and though now already engraved in marble and erected over the unremonstrating ashes of the dead, I feel compelled to perform the unpleasant duty of declaring its utter untruthfulness. By whomsoever written, I know it falsifies history and outrages truth and justice. It obliterates from the Record the infant life of the Free Public School system of San Francisco; blots from remembrance, not my name merely, but would bury in oblivion forever, the fact of my years of patient and faithful pioneer labor in California; and all knowledge or recollection of that humble accomplishment which has formed the cherished object and chief purpose of my life, and to which most of its golden years have already been devoted.

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[*] I think I justly attribute my late disasters to that influence which has recently developed and resulted in the inscription referred to. All the troubles and annoyances of any importance, which I have experienced during my connection with the School Department of this city, I have been able, as in the present instance, to trace to the one same common source; often to the same individual parties. But though those schemes of ungenerous rivalry, jealousy, envy and selfishness, have achieved an apparent victory, their triumph will be but brief: there is too much discrimination, too much just and liberal sentiment in this community, to render possible more than their short duration.
J. C. P.

[†] See Reports of the Superintendent of Public Schools for 1852-3, and also the Report for 1859. Also, "Tribute to the Memory of Col. T. J. Nevins," offered and passed in Board of Education; and Memorial to the Legislature on same subject; Resolutions of Board of Education, naming the Denman School, etc., etc.
J. C. P.

[‡] That epitaph is in the following words: "*The Board of Education unite with the Citizens of San Francisco in erecting this Monnment to his* [T. J. Nevins] *Memory, as the* FOUNDER *of Common Schools of this City and State.*" * * * *

Against this injustice for my own, for my family, and for truth's sake, I enter my protest—however unheeded and ineffectual; and in support of that protest, I give to the Public the accompanying papers. Those who prefer Truth to Fiction, and Right to Wrong, will join in this protest, when they have read what is here presented.

J. C. PELTON.

San Francisco, January 2d, 1865.

Correspondence with Common School Committee,

In Reference to Publication of Report.

San Francisco, December 8th, 1864.

To Messrs. Badger, Pope and Ayer, Committee on Origin of the Free Schools of San Francisco:

Gentlemen,—For reasons which you will readily appreciate, I desire for publication the manuscript and miscellaneous documents of your recent Report. When you reflect upon the peculiar circumstances attending the rendering and reception of your report in the Board of Education, I doubt not you will readily grant my request, and furnish me with the above manuscripts. Please be careful to furnish me with *all* the papers and letters you may have upon the subject of your Report.

Your Obedient Servant,

J. C. PELTON.

San Francisco, December 11th, 1864.

Dear Sir: We herewith furnish you for publication, as you desire, the manuscript and miscellaneous papers of our recent Report on the Origin of the Free Public School System of San Francisco. We consider such publication due to you, and not to you alone, but as also due to such of this community as may feel an interest in the subject. Not only do we regret that the Board of Education did not see fit to "adopt" or "record," or authorize the publication of the Report, with accompanying papers, thus virtually suppressing it; but we also deem the course pursued discourteous to the committee and unjust to yourself; we therefore cordially lend our sanction to the publication as proposed.

We remain, respectfully yours,

WM. G. BADGER,
JNO. F. POPE,
W. AYER.

To J. C. Pelton, Esq.

We have read the above in proof, and find the same to be correct.

WM. S. BADGER,
JNO. D. POPE,
WASHINGTON AYER,
Committee.

San Francisco, January 3, 1865.

The Nevins Monument.

Memorial of Citizens.

[In Board of Education, June 14th, 1864.]

A petition was received from several gentlemen asking that the monument prepared to be erected to the memory of the late Mr. Nevins might not be allowed to be erected, as being calculated to do an injury to the memory of the living, instead of an honor to the dead. It was referred to a Special Committee, consisting of Messrs. Badger, Pope and Lunt.*

The communication was as follows:

San Francisco, June 14th, 1864.

To the Honorable Board of Education of the City and County of San Francisco:

Gentlemen,—We, the undersigned, desire to direct the attention of your Honorable Body to the inscription proposed to be inscribed on the monument about to be erected, under your auspices, to the memory of Thomas J. Nevins, deceased. In that inscription, he is awarded the credit of having been the "Founder of the Common Schools of this City and State." The undersigned, having been pioneers in the settlement and organization of the same, and familiar with the events marking the progress of our young community, can but look upon the proposed inscription as an attempt to attribute honor to the dead at the expense of the living, and in violation of the truth of history. While willing and anxious to award to Mr. Nevins all the merit and honor due to him for his earnest labors in the cause of education in this City, we are not willing that the credit fairly due those who preceded him, in similar labors, shall be thus summarily ignored or denied.

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* Mr. Lunt became Secretary of the Board soon after, and Dr. Washington Ayer was appointed on the above committee in his stead.

Common schools were instituted in San Francisco in December, 1849. The first school ordinances, regulating and establishing such, were passed by the Common Council of this city, April 3d and 8th, 1850. At the session of the Legislature held at San Jose during the winter of 1850-51, a bill was drawn up for the purpose of establishing State common schools, and, under the favor of Broderick, Tingley, and others of the Legislature, and Judge Marvin, State Superintendent of Common Schools, became a law.* It was the basis of our present system, which is merely an improvement upon the first necessarily somewhat crude bill. The first law was an experiment—the present has been perfected from that and the experience since gained. As Mr. Nevins did not reach this State until after the events named,† we are unable to perceive the propriety or justice of the inscription referred to, and would therefore ask that this memorial, and the subject-matter of which it treats, be appropriately referred and considered, in order that justice to all, and no injustice to any, be done.

And, as in duty bound, would ever pray, &c.

FRANK SOULE,
JEROME RICE,
EDWARD FRANKLIN,
JOHN MIDDLETON,
CAPT. JAMES LUDLOW,
PHILO WHITE,
WILLIAM FELL,
JOHN A. McGLYNN,
R. S. EELLS,
W. B. FARWELL,
JOHN S. ELLIS,
W. T. THOMPSON,
T. B. CUNNINGHAM,
BENJ. B. COLT, M. D.,
J. L. RIDDLE,
J. H. SPARROW,
F. D. KOHLER,
HERMAN WOHLER,
F. A. BARRY,
Wm. GALLOWAY,
J. R. LAWRENCE,
MILLO CALKIN,
J. B. BADGER,
JAMES D. HAYES,
B. H. FREEMAN,
J. P. LEESE,
OLIVER B. HUFF,

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* For my part in this bill see letters of T. J. Nevins, W. C. Hoff and J. Warner; also, Legislative Reports—Index p. 2. J. C. P.

† Slightly in error: Mr Nevins arrived in San Francisco in January, 1850. J. C. P.

Report of Committee.

To the Honorable Board of Education of the City and County of San Francisco:

GENTLEMEN,—The undersigned, appointed by your Honorable Body as a Committee to investigate and report upon the origin of the Common Schools of this city, would respectfully present the following Report:

In entering upon the duty assigned to us, we prepared a circular, which was addressed to a large number of citizens, most of whom were old residents, and some had been officially connected with the Government of the Pueblo and City, either as members of the Ayuntamiento, Common Council, or other departments of the City Government, and who therefore might have a more perfect and personal knowledge of the facts sought to be elicted.

The Circular is as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTIONS,
San Francisco, June, 1864.

DEAR SIR:

A question has arisen in the community, and in our department, as to the origin of "Common Schools" in this City. You have been an early resident of San Francisco, are doubtless familiar with the history of our Public Schools, and the facts attending their establishment.

To whom, in your opinion, belongs the credit of having inaugurated the *Free School System* in this City?

By answering, upon *this sheet*, at your earliest convenience, you will place the undersigned and the Department of Public Schools under obligations.

Please address the Committee on Common Schools, Rooms of the Board of Eduation, San Francisco.

(Signed) W. G. Badger,
J. F. Pope,
D. Lunt,
Committee.

P. S. An answer is solicited to the following questions:

1st. At what date was the first Free Public School opened?
2d. By what authority was it established!
3d. By whom was it taught?
4th. What amount of salary did the teacher receive?

Application was also made to the records of the Common Council, to see what might there be found of interest which would serve to throw light upon the subject, with the following result:

[Extract from Records of the Ayuntamiento or Town Council of San Francisco, from August, 1849, until May 30th, A. D. 1851.]

The petition* of O. C. Wheeler and others was read and referred to the Committee on Education. [March 4th, 1850.]

In meeting of Ayuntamiento, March 29th, 1850, it was, on motion of Mr. Green,

"*Resolved*, That from the first day of April, A. D. 1850, John C. Pelton and Mrs. Pelton his wife, be employed as teachers for the Public School in the Baptist Church, which has been offered to the Council free of charge, and that the average number of scholars shall not exceed one hundred; and that they shall be entitled to a monthly salary, during the pleasure ot the Council, of five hundred dollars per month, payable each and every month."

At the same meeting the Committee on Education was instructed to prepare an Ordinance on the regulation of said school, and the following Ordinance was reported by Mr. Murray, and adopted April 8th, 1850:

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* Written and presented at my instance, praying for the adoption of my School as a free Public School. J. C. P.

An Ordinance for the Regulation of Common Schools.

1st. *Be it ordained by the Common Council of San Francisco*, That from and after the passage of this Act it shall be the duty of J. C. Pelton, who has been employed by the Council as a public teacher to open a school in the Baptist Chapel.

2d. Said school shall be opened from half-past 8 A. M., to 12 M., and from 2 P. M., until 5 P. M., and shall continue open from Monday until Friday at five o'clock, P. M.*

3d. The number of scholars shall not exceed the number of one hundred; and no scholar shall be admitted under the age of four, or over the age of sixteen.

4th. All persons desirous of having their children instructed in said school shall first obtain an order from the Chairman of the Committee on Education, and all children obtaining said order shall be instructed in said school free of charge.

5th. It shall be the duty of said Pelton to report to the Council on the first of each and every month the number of scholars and the progress of said school.

H. C. MURRAY,
F. TILFORD.

[IN COMMON COUNCIL, May 3d, 1850.]

The report† of J. C. Pelton, teacher of the Public School, was received and placed on file.

I, James W. Bingham, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the original records as the same now remain in this office.

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* Boston system of School hours.

† This was my FIRST monthly report.

In witness whereof I hereunto place my hand (having no seal of office), this sixth day of August, 1864.

JAMES W. BINGHAM,
Clerk Board of Supervisors.

[The above certificate covers all the preceding extracts from the Public Records.]

We also append the following extract from the *Journal of Commerce*, of that early date.

March 5th, 1850.—"A petition* of citizens to the City Council for renumeration of teacher of the school in the Baptist Church for past services, and an appropriation for continuance of the same, was [previous night] referred to the Committee on Education."

April 3d, 1850.—"We are gratified to see that the City Council has made some provisions for sustaining Public Schools in San Francisco. Mr. Pelton's school is taken under the protection of the City Fathers." * * * * * * *

Also, an extract from the Supplement to W. H. O. Grady's Report, as Superintendent in 1854:

"The First Public School in San Francisco was by J. C. Pelton, 1849, in the Baptist Church. At first not paid, then allowed salary by Ayuntamento, $500 per month, himself and lady." * * * *

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* Petition of Trustees of Baptist Church—O. C. Wheeler, Jno. F. Pope, O. L. Ross, and others.

Proceedings of the Board of Education.

Resignation of Mr. Pelton.

In May, 1860, the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted by the Board of Education; as reported in the *San Francisco Herald:*

WHEREAS, Mr. J. C. Pelton, who has been for more than *ten years*† connected with the Public Schools of the City and County of San Francisco, has resigned from the department; therefore,

Resolved, That we regret the necessity which compels Mr. Pelton to sever his connection with the Public Schools.

Resolved, That we recognize in Mr. Pelton a thorough and faithful instructor; that his connection with the department has been in the highest degree creditable to himself and profitable to the schools under his charge.

Resolved, That these resolutions be entered on the records of this Board, and a copy be transmitted to Mr. Pelton.

The foregoing extracts, from Public Records, the Press, etc., will serve to show, in part, what had been the official acts of the Government of the City of San Francisco at an early day.

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†This carries my connection back to 1850, a period in reference to which, except in this instance, the records of the Department have ever remained silent. For this single instance of truthful reference to my connection with the early history of the Public Schools in this city, found in all the record of the Board of Education, I am especially indebted to Dr. C. C. Knowles, then President of the Board. J. C. P.

In response to our *Circular*, we received numerous replies, from which we have selected such as have the most direct bearing upon the questions proposed. And in this place, your Committee would acknowledge the great obligation they are under to the Hon. Frank Soulè, for the valuable services he has rendered in investigating the question, arranging the testimony which has been adduced, and for the information which he has himself so generously furnished.

From the testimony which is annexed hereto, your Committee can but report, that, in their opinion, to John C. Pelton (if to any one) belongs the honor of having established the first Free Public School in this city *and inagurated the Free Public School System.*

While we thus award to him the honor, we would not withhold from the late T. J. Nevins, that meed of praise which is due to him:

From the Board of Education he received his appointment on the twenty-first of October, 1851, as Superintendent of the Free Common Schools of the city, and was by them instructed to rent, or otherwise obtain an adequate number of buildings for Schoolhouses, and to fit them up for the accommodation of the Public Schools; to provide them with suitable furniture and fixtures, and to take measures for putting the schools in operation.

The Board of Education was then composed of—S. R. Harris, Mayor; John Cotter, Alderman; N. Holland, Asst. Alderman; John Willson and Henry E. Lincoln—citizens.

After receiving his appointment under the provisions of the Free School Ordinance of September 25th, he proceeded to the discharge of his duties: and, November 7th, 1851, James Denman was appointed teacher in District No. 1, Happy Valley, and with him was associated Mrs. Ab. Hyde; and at the *same* date, a school was opened on Powell Street; January 8th, 1852, at Rincon Point; February 9th, 1852, at Spring Valley.

Through his instrumentality the school house and lot, at Spring Valley, was leased by the Board of Trustees of the Spring Valley Religious and School Society to San Francisco for ninety-nine years, for the sum of six hundred and seventy-eight dollars, payable in advance.

His connection with the Department of Education is a matter of record, and to his labors, while connected with it, his friends may well point with pride; nor need any just meed or praise or credit be withheld from those who precede him, in order to add to what was justly his due.

We give the following extract from a letter written by T. J. Nevins *himself*, in which he awards to J. C. Pelton the credit of establishing the first school in this city, and therein mentions the object which he had in view in visiting the Capital.

"*The bearer, Mr. J. C. Pelton, is the Principal of the School first established in this city, and has sustained it from the beginning at great sacrifice and with distinguished ability. He is anxious to get the best possible school system adopted, and now visits the Capital in connection with that object; and any facilities you may be able to afford him in bringing his views and suggestions to the notice of the members of the Legislature will, I have no doubt, tend to the promotion of the best interest of popular education.*

"*He proposes some amendments to Mr. Heydenfeldt's bill, which he will explain to you.*" * * * *

T. J. NEVINS.

It may be noticed that he omits to mention the fact that the school was a Free Public School; but on this point there need be no doubt, as all the testimony which we present with this report, whether from gentlemen whose children were attendants upon the school, or from pupils themselves, bear witness to the fact, that instruction was *free to all*, without exception, and even when money was tendered in payment for the instruction, it was refused. See letter from J. Leclerc, D. O. Shattuck, A. Louderback, and others.

We must also call particular attention to the testimony adduced in regard to the labors and services of J. C. Pelton, in perfecting and securing the passage of the bill for establishing Common Schools, introduced during the session of the Legislature of 1851, by Hon. E. Heydenfeldt. See Legislative Reports appended.*

Among the mass of testimony which we present with this report, the only record we find which is adverse to the conclusion your Committee have arrived, is the communication from Rev. A. Williams, [and Rev. S. H. Willey, read in open Board,] to which we refer. [See Index, p. 2.]

All of which is respectfully submitted.

WM. G. BADGER,
JNO. F. POPE,
WASHINGTON AYER.

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*See Index, p. 2. Also, letters of Hon. Wm. C. Hoff, T. J. Nevins, Hon. Campbell and J. Warner, etc., e[illegible]

Presentation of Report of Committee.

Remarks of Mr. Pope and Others.

On rising to present the Report of the Committee on Common Schools, Mr. Pope (in the absence of the Chairman of the Committee) remarked in substance as follows:

MR. CHAIRMAN: I desire the adoption of the Report here submitted. Your Committee have given the subject matter referred to them, very careful consideration. They felt this due to the parties supposed to be interested, and due, also, to the subject itself—the truth of history. It will be seen by the Report that your Committee are unanimous in the opinion that the epitaph now inscribed upon the monument about to be erected to the memory of the late Col. T. J. Nevins, does (in the language of the protest of Frank Soulé and others upon the subject) give "honor to the dead at the expense of the living." Your Committee, indeed, feel that the epitaph in question contains a palpable and positive untruth, which should not be allowed thus to go down to posterity without the solemn protest of the Board of Education—more especially as the said epitaph or inscription implicates, even makes the Board a party to the fraud. Whatever Col. Nevins may subsequently have done in the faithful performance of his duties as Superintendent of

Public Schools, and whatever honor or credit his friends may justly, and should claim for him in that connection, two things are too incontrovertible to require further discussion or remark, to-wit: 1st, That Col. Nevins had nothing to do with the original organization of the Free Public School System of this city. 2d, That such original movement was inaugurated by J. C. Pelton. For these reasons, Mr. Chairman, I move the adoption of the Report, and that five hundred copies be published for distribution. I may here, without impropriety, as I conceive, state that I have personal knowledge of the whole matter. I knew Mr. Pelton almost from the day of his arrival. Mr. Pelton, almost immediately upon his arrival, made his views and plans known to the Trustees of the First Baptist Society, of which I was one and the Chairman, and asked permission to use temporarily our church, in which to organize a Free School and inaugurate his proposed enterprise. I was familiar with his movements and efforts from that day. I also knew Mr. Nevins, when several years subsequently he became connected with the Department as Superintendent of Public Schools.

Mr. Pope then renewed his motion for the adoption of the Committee's Report, and the printing of five hundred copies thereof for distribution.

Messrs. Thompson, Badger and Grover sustained the motion of Mr. Pope; but the motion was lost.

Mr. Pope then moved the printing of two hundred copies.

Lost.

He then moved that one hundred dollars be appropriated to pay for as many copies as it would.

Lost.

Dr. Washington Ayer, of Committee, said he was surprised at this unexpected opposition to what he conceived to be proper actions on the Report of the Special Committee; they had devoted much time and labor in preparing the Report, which would be a very valuable one to the Department for reference in the future; thought the Report should be adopted and published, at least in courtesy to Committee, as also in justice to Mr. Pelton and other interested parties, who had been addressed by the Committee, and taken special care in furnishing the desired information.

Mr. Tait, Superintendent, said he was led to ask in regard to the discussion and the whole matter at issue, *cui bono?* Thought Mr. Nevins, from what he had heard,[*] entitled to the credit of writing the first[†] school ordinance—though Mr. Pelton, he thought, taught the first school; he had always learned so from old teachers and other persons whom he had heard speak upon the subject; yet, he saw no good reason for publishing the Report; thought that it would be well to place the Report on file—then all who chose to do so, can come and read for themselves.

Mr. Lynch opposed the proposition, generally; thought the Board had no authority to pay for the printing of the Report.[‡]

Mr. Gray responded Mr. Tait's sentiments, *cui bono?*—opposed the adoption or printing of the Committee's Report; if Mr. Pelton wished the Committee's Report published, he should pay for it himself; the Report was a glorification of Mr. Pelton—or, rather, a "Pelton Glorification;" it was enough to place the Report on file.

Motions to adopt, and print or publish, were all lost.

Mr. Pope remarked, that he conceived the action and feeling manifest in the Board as unaccountable, and as discourteous to the Committee, after all the time they had spent and trouble they had taken in this matter—and that, too, at the instance of the Board itself.

Mr. Pope then offered a series of Resolutions which should express the sense of the Board of Education in regard to the subject matter of the Report of Committee—the incorrectness of the epitaph, and the unauthorized and improper use of the title or name of the Board of Education therein.

Upon those Resolutions occurred the following discussion:

President Lynch vacating the chair, strenuously opposed the Resolutions of Mr. Pope, as he had the proposition to adopt and print the Report of committee.

Mr. Lynch also thought no one person entitled to the credit of founding the Free School System in San Francisco, but thought Mr. Pelton probably taught the first school.

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[*] Mr. Tait arrived in San Francisco in 1855. J. C. P.

[†] What if so? But Mr. Nevins did NOT write the FIRST School Ordinance. Judge H. C. Murray did. [See Index, p. 2.] J. C. P.

[‡] The Report was already in type, by the authority vested in its Committee; and subsequently, when the type had been "distributed," the printer's bill for "composition" was presented to the Board and paid—Mr. Lynch, without remark, voted for the payment of the bill, as though he THEN deemed it entirely proper and correct for the Board to pay the same. J. C. P.

Mr. Hitchcock opposed the Resolutions and printing of the Committee's Report; thought he remembered that Mr. Nevins established the first Public Schools in San Francisco; he had heard so, and this was his impression from what he had heard and from what he could remember; he had heard of some other person who kept the first Public School; if he had time, he could ascertain who that person was; thought he kept his school in Mr. Willey's church; thought it was in some way connected with Mr. Willey's Sunday School.

Dr. W. A. Grover said he was Clerk of the Common Council in 1850, and knew all about the matter from personal observation; he knew Mr. Pelton's efforts brought the first Public School into existence and sustained it for a considerable period at great sacrifice on his part—for time in those early days was money; he did, at that time, express to Mr. Pelton some surprise at his course; but he learned from Mr. Pelton's statements that his object was not to make money, but to establish* a Public School or Schools. In answer to Mr. Hitchcock, Dr. Grover said it was useless for any one to speak of hearsay, or of their impressions, as opposed to his absolute personal knowledge. He hoped the Resolutions would be adopted and published; thought it but justice to the parties interested, especially Mr. Pelton, and as but courteous to the Committee.

But this motion to adopt Mr. Pope's Resolutions was also lost.

President Lynch then presented and moved the adoption of the following Preamble and Resolutions:†

Whereas, The inscription upon the monument erected in memory of the late T. J. Nevins, states that "The Board of Education and the citizens of San Francisco unite in erecting this monument to his memory as the founder of Common Schools of this City and State;" and

Whereas, It appears by the Report of the Special Committee of this Board, appointed to investigate his claims to such an inscription, that he did not establish, teach, or found the first Common or Free School in this City or State, nor did this Board aid in any manner in erecting said monument, or any way authorize the inscription to be placed on the same; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Board of Education do in this public manner enter their protest against the inscription upon said monument, as not warranted by the facts in the case, and as awarding to the deceased honors that are not wholly due to any one person.

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* I would have it constantly remembered, that I never claimed to be the FOUNDER of any particular Common School SYSTEM, but only to have inaugurated and nurtured in its infancy THE IDEA and love of the institution itself, in the pioneer days of California's history. J. C. P.

† This action occurred after the monument HAD BEEN ERECTED, with epitaph, as at first written!!—notwithstanding ☞ the first action on the subject in the Board of Education took place more than FOUR MONTHS previously!!! ??? J. C. P.

And be it further resolved, That from the same evidence we are led to believe, that to John C. Pelton (although not the first Teacher of a School in this city) belongs the honor of having opened and taught the first* *free* School within the city limits.

MR. POPE remarked, that he would accept and vote for the Resolutions of Mr. Lynch, on the ground that "a half-loaf was better than none."

The Resolutions were then adopted by a unanimous vote. Ayes—Director Mastic, Pope, Ayer, Hitchcock, Grover, Gray, Sheppard, Thompson, Widber, Lynch, Badger, Doble. Noes—....

During the above discussion, Rev. A. Williams was present, and sought permission to address the Board in defense of the epitaph and his connection therewith, which was refused; but a communication, with alike object, from this gentleman, was received by Committee and filed.

A letter from Rev. Mr. S. H. Willey, having the same object, was also received and read. [See this letter, with comments; also, that of Rev. A. Williams, Index, page 2, with comments, by Frank Soulé.]

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* Of course, there had previously been several private Classes or Schools. J. C. P.

We have examined and read the Report of our Committee, and the discussions thereon, in proof, and find the same to be correct.

WM. S. BADGER,
JNO. F. POPE,
Committee on Origin of Public Schools in San Francisco.

SAN FRANCISCO, January 5, 1865.

We find the foregoing to be correct.

WASHINGTON AYER,
Of Committee.

Correct.

S. B. THOMPSON,
W. A. GROVER,
Members of the Board of Education.

SAN FRANCISCO, January 6th, 1865.

TESTIMONY

OF

EARLY OFFICERS

OF THE

Municipality of Yerba Buena--San Francisco.

[From Gen. Jno. W. Geary, Alcalde of Yerba Buena in 1849 and Mayor of San Francisco in 1850-51.]

Headquarters Second Division,
☞ City of Atlanta, Ga., Nov. 4th, 1864.*

Wm. G. Badger and others:

Gentlemen,—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of June —.

In reply, I will state, that the first Public School of which I have any knowledge, in the city of San Francisco, was commenced in the autumn of 1849; it was established by the authority of the "Ayuntamiento," and paid for out of the City Treasury. It was taught by Mr. J. C. Pelton, at a salary the amount of which I can not now remember; but full information can be gleaned from the Journal of Ayuntamiento,† which I suppose is extant.

With high respect, your obedient servant,

JNO. W. GEARY.

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* Received since Report was rendered. J. C. P.

† Since consulted with great satisfaction. J. C. P.

[From Wm. Greene, Esq., President of the Board of Aldermen in 1850.]

Gentlemen of Common School Committee:

I am sure, of my own knowledge, that the credit of establishing the first Free Public School in San Francisco is due to John C. Pelton.

WM. GREENE,
President Board of Aldermen in 1850.

[From R. H. Sinton, City Treasurer in 1851.]

San Francisco, January 5th, 1865.*

Gentlemen of Committee:—The only time in my life that I ever held office of any kind was in the year 1851, when, without solicitation on my part, I was elected City Treasurer of San Francisco, at the election held in April of that year. In the discharge of the duties of the above named position, my memory distinctly serves me as having often paid Mr. Pelton his salary,† as Principal of the only Public School then existing in this city; and the impression is equally clear, that Mr. Pelton was the originator of our present admirable Common Schools of this city, and is undoubtedly and meritoriously entitled to all the honor pertaining thereto.

Very respectfully,
R. H. SINTON.

[From H. M. Hale, City and County Auditor of San Francisco, 1862-3-4.]

My impression is, and always has been, since January, 1850, that Mr. Pelton taught the first school in San Francisco, and that it was opened at his own expense as a Free School.

H. M. HALE.

[Letter from Ex-Alderman C. V. Stuart.]

Gentlemen:—I was a member of the first Board of Aldermen from May 4th, 1850, to May, 1851; during which time J. C. Pelton and wife were the Principals of the Public Schools.* I was always, in my position, an advocate and warm surporter of said school, even under the most embarrassing conditions of our finances; and I regard J. C. Pelton the inaugurator of our first Free Schools, if not the founder of our present system.

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* Received since rendering of Report.

† Always in scrip. J. C. P.

Yours, very respectfully,

CHS. V. STUART.

[From R. C. PAGE, Clerk of Common Council in 1851.]

MESSRS. BADGER, POPE, AND LUNT:

Gentlemen,—I am clearly of the opinion that Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Pelton were the first persons to open, and teach, in a Free Public School in this city. I can not remember the date, though it was at a very early day.

ROB'T C. PAGE.

[From ex-Alderman J. P. Van Ness.]

In my opinion the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System of San Francisco belongs to John C. Pelton.

The first Public School was opened in December, 1849; by authority of Town Council, April, 1850; under the superintendence of J. C. Pelton.

J. P. VAN NESS,
Member of the first Board of Alderman, 1850.

In my opinion the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System of San Francisco belongs to John C. Pelton.

The first Public School was opened the latter part of 1849; by authority of Ayuntamiento; under the superintendence of J. C. Pelton.

CHAS. D. CARTER,
Member of Common Council, 1854.

[From H. S. GATES, Supervisor in 1862-3, and a resident since 1849.]

In justice to Mr. J. C. Pelton, I wish to say, that in accordance with my best recollection, he was teacher of the first Public School established by American rule in San Francisco, A. D. 1850.

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* Primary and Grammar. J. C. P.

H. S. GATES.

[From Hon. P. W. SHEPHEARD, Justice in 1850, Judge of Court of Sessions in 1851-2-3, and Police Judge, 1864-5.]

I knew Mr. Pelton teaching a Public School on Washington street, in January, 1850, and subsequently my son, Lieut. J. J. Shepheard, went to school to him. I know of no other Public School at that time.

P. W. SHEPHEARD.

[From Hon. ALEX. CAMPBELL, County Judge in 1850-2, and Assemblyman in 1860-1.]

SAN FRANCISCO, August 13th, 1864.

MESSRS. W. G. BADGER AND OTHERS, COMMITTEE:

Gentlemen,—In answer to the within communication I desire to say, that according to my recollection, (which I think is perfectly clear upon this subject,) the first free Public School in this city was opened in the latter part of 1849, or very early in 1850, under the authority of the Ayuntamiento. It was taught by Mr. and Mrs. John C. Pelton. For a considerable period (I think for several months) they received no salary. Subsequently, provisions was made to pay them for future services; *but not for past.* The amount of this provision, I am unable to state. Under these circumstances, I am of opinion, that the credit of having inaugurated the Free School system in this city is due to Mr. and Mrs. Pelton. For this reason, I labored strenuously, though unsuccessfully, to procure the nomination of Mr. Pelton to the office of State School Superintendent by the Anti-Lecompton State Convention in 1859.

I am your obd't servant,'

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL.

[From Hon. T. W. FREELON, County Judge 1852-57.]

SAN FRANCISCO, August 10th, 1864.

MESSRS, BADGER, POPE AND LUNT:

Gentlemen,—I have answered within according to my recollection and impressions. If you should ask, who started the first Free School? I should say, Mr. and Mrs. Pelton. If you ask, who inaugurated the "Free School System?" I am compelled to say I am not competent to decide.

I am, very respectfully,
T. W. FREELON.

San Francisco, August 13, 1865.

We, the undersigned, have been in this city since 1849, and have always understood that Mr. J. C. Pelton was the teacher of the first Public School organized in the city of San Francisco, State of California, under American rule.

J. P. MANROW. — **BENJAMIN OBER, M. D.**
E. P. PECKHAM. — **Wm. C. KIBBE.**

[From C. M. K. Spaulding, Member of the City Council of San Francisco during the period of which he speaks, 1850-1.]

Mr. Pelton was the first man who established a Free School in California, and has been ever since a devoted friend of the cause of education.

C. M. K. SPAULDING.

[From W. K. Van Allen, formerly a member of the City Council, addressed to Mr. Pelton.]

I would say, that when I was a member of your family, in the winter of 1849 and 1850, yourself, and a part of the time yourself and wife, were engaged in organizing and teaching a Public School. It was a matter of surprise with myself, and with all who knew of your efforts, that you received *no pay* for your services from the city. But in a conversation I had with you that winter in relation to your school, I think I remember you stated that you refused to receive any pay or tuition from your scholars, and that your object was "*not to make money,*" but "*to establish a Free School,*" in which object I think you soon after succeeded."

W. K. VAN ALLEN.

[From N. C. LANE, formerly City and County Supervisor, to Mr. Pelton, 1857.]

During the latter part of the year 1849, there was a Free Public School established in the Baptist Church on Washington street, and was continued and open to the public for all children to attend until some time during the year 1851. This school was taught by you, and I believe that you were chiefly instrumental in its organization. If my memory serves me right, you opened the school on your own account, and afterwards petitioned the City Council to organize the same as a Public School and allow you a reasonable compensation for your services. The Council complied with the petition; authorizing you by ordinance to open the school as a Public School.

N. C. LANE.

[From Judge D. O. SHATTUCK, of San Francisco Superior Court, 1855-6-7, to Mr. Pelton.

In informing myself on my arrival of the state of society, means of education, etc., I learned that you were then teaching a Public School, that you had yourself *founded.* That is, that you taught all who would attend, without tuition fees exacted from the pupils or their parents. This was the common report among those who professed to be informed on the subject, and prior to the organization of the city government, under the first charter.

I remember that, the City Council did so recognize it, at an early day after their organization. I feel sure that on my arrival here, you were teaching a Free Public School, and I heard of no other until *long afterwards.*

Very respectfully,

D. O. SHATTUCK.

The foot note on page 25, "always in Scrip," is incorrect. During my short term of service while Mr. Sinton was Controller, payments to me were cash.
J. C. P.

TESTIMONY

OF

EARLY AND MORE RECENT

Officers of the Federal, State and City Governments, and others.

[From Hon. S. R. Harris, Mayor in 1852-53, and Controller in 1853-54.]

Messrs. W. G. Badger and others, Committee:

Gentlemen,—In reply to the within communication, I would state, that according to my recollection, (and I believe it to be perfectly clear upon this subject,) the first free Public School in San Francisco was opened in the latter part of 1849, or very early in 1850, under the authority of the Ayuntamiento. It was taught by Mr John C. Pelton. For a considerable period—I think for several months—he received no salary. Subsequently, the school was adopted by the city as a free Public School, and was continued and supported as such. Under these circumstances, I am of opinion, that the credit of having inaugurated the free school system in this city, is due to our fellow-citizen, Mr. J. C. Pelton. Very respectfully,

R. S. HARRIS, M. D.

Messrs. W. G. Badger and others:

Gentlemen,—I have had the pleasure of an intimate acquaintance with Mr. J. C. Pelton for some fifteen years past; have always known him as the pioneer teacher in San Francisco, and believe him justly entitled to that honor. Whatever may have been the intentions of others in this matter, to Mr. Pelton is due the credit of taking the initiatory in the practical and successful establishment of free schools on the Pacific coast. Very respectfully,

I. ROWELL, M. D.

SAN FRANCISCO, June, 1864.

GENTLEMEN OF COM. SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

We, the undersigned, firmly believe that the credit of inaugurating the Free School System in San Francisco is due to our friend and esteemed citizen, John C. Pelton, Esq.

JNO. A SUTTER,
[The eminent pioneer, a resident of California since 1839.]

O. M. WOZENCRAFT,
[Ex-U. S. Indian Agent.]

SAMUEL PURDY,
[Lieut.-Governor in 1852–3.]

THOS. SHILLABER,
[Formerly of U. S. Navy.]

HARVEY S. BROWN,
[Dist. Att'y in 1862–3.]

M. S. WHITING,
[State Senator in 1862–3.]

R. F. PERKINS,
[Post Master, San Francisco.]

R. M. JESSUP,
[City Council in 1852–3.]

MILO HOODLEY,
[Ex-City and County Surveyor.]

S. W. HOLLIDAY,
[Ex-City Attorney.]

R. S. DORR,
[Alderman in 1851.]

J. R. HARDENBERG,
[Ex-Mayor of Sacramento—now of San Francisco.]

J. SHORT,
[Deputy Sheriff.]

H. H. BYRNE,
[City Attorney in 1850–7.]

J. P. DYER,
[Ex-Mayor of Sacramento—now of San Francisco.]

J. M. BUFFINGTON,
[Ex-Mayor of Stockton—now of San Francisco.]

G. W. GREEN,
[Common Councilman in 1851.]

CHARLES L. WIGGINS,
[Mayor's Clerk, 49er.]

DAN LOUDERBACK,
P. S.—I was a pupil in Mr. Pelton's School, in 1850.
[Now Attorney in Police Court.]

J. H. HESSE,
[10 years on City Police.]

R. P. ROBINSON,
[Clerk Police Court.]

JAMES GRAVES,
[Of City Council in 1854.]

C. E. BUCKINGHAM.
[County Treasurer in 1851.]

H. F. WILLIAMS.
[Ex-Pres't Mechanics' Institute.]

R. M. BRAGDON.
C. W. NICHOLS.
A. R. BIGGS.
A. C. BONNELL.
WM. MURRAY.
JOHN C. WHITE.
J. B. BADGER.
C. C. HAYDEN.
[Resident since 1849.]

C. T. BALDWIN.
[Resident since June, 1849.]

T. H. HATCH.
CHAS. E. BARRY.
PETER H. WELLER.
J. T. SANBORN.
J. S. FORWALD.
BENJ. D. ALMEY.
[Resident since 1849.]

E. P. CLARK.
WM. NEIL.
WM. H. JONES.
JOHN WHITE.
H. T. BURR.
Mr. Pelton was the first teacher known to me as above, in Sept. 1851.]

GENTLEMEN OF COMMON SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

We, the undersigned, are sure, of our own knowledge, that the credit of establishing the first Public School in San Francisco, is due to John C. Pelton.

FERDINAND VASSAULT.
J. C. DUNCAN.
N. PROCTOR SMITH.
D. H. HASKELL.
J. W. SULLIVAN.
JAMES FLOOD.
JOHN SHORT, SR.
WM. HAMELL.
J. E. DAVIS.
FRANK WHEELER.
NATHANIEL PAGE.
WM. L. DUNCAN.
JOHN J. HALEY.
WM. MITCHELL.
A. J. BOWIE, M. D.
G. G. HAYDEN.
RICHARD TOBIN.
WM. NORRIS.

CAPT. E. A. POOLE.
JAMES BOWMAN,
[Sec'y to Mayor Geary, 1850.]
DR. GALEN BURDELL,
[Forty-niner.]
T. C. McCALLUM,
[Resident since 1850.]
D. S. DIKEMAN.
G. W. CONKLIN, Pioneer.
M. D. BORUCK.
[Editor Spirit of the Times.]
F. H. WELLS.

I concur in the above.
HALL McALLISTER.

From general knowledge, I approve of the above.
J. W. BINGHAM.

Testimony of Early Members of Ayuntamiento, (or City Council,) Three Trustees of Mr. Douglas' School.

[From C. L. Ross, a member of the City Council during the period of which he speaks, and "School Trustee," addressed to J. C. Pelton in 1857.]

In the winter of 1849, I recollect your presenting to me some letters from parties in Boston, one of them from Gov. Briggs, recommending you as a teacher, and stating that you came here for the *express purpose* of devoting yourself to teaching *Free Schools.*

There was at that time but *one church* building in the place, (the one erected for the use of the Baptists,) and you applied to me for its use, which was tendered gratis. In December, 1849, you opened the school and continued it without intermission until 1851, when the town (then become a city) organized a new system of Public Schools. Your school was emphatically a Free School, and your salary was paid by the town.

Yours, truly,

C. L. ROSS.

[From Wm. H. Davis, Trustee of Mr. Douglas' School in 1848, and member of City Council in 1849, to J. C. Pelton in 1857.]

I beg to state that I was an early resident of San Francisco, having settled there in July, 1848. In relation to the public schools, I can remember some small schools that were kept by different persons in 1847 or 1848. I had some connection with a school, being a school trustee in 1848. This was not a free school, however, tuition being charged for pupils attending. It was kept in the school house on the Plaza, which was afterwards used as a Court House. [Lasted ten weeks.]

The first Free Public School established in San Francisco, was organized by yourself in the latter part of 1849, in the Baptist Church on Washington street, while I was a member of the Common Council or Ayuntamiento.

Yours, respectfully,
WILLIAM H. DAVIS.

[From V. J. Fourgeaud Trustee of Mr. Douglas' School in 1848 to John C. Pelton, in 1847.]

In answer to your note requesting information in relation to Public Schools in the city of San Francisco, I must state, that I left California for the eastern States early in 1849, and, therefore, was not here when the schools went, *for the first time*, into successful operation. An attempt was, however, made before the discovery of the gold, to establish a public school in San Francisco in the early part of 1848. Five trustees were regularly elected at a town election held for that purpose. Dr. Townsend, C. L. Ross, Mr. Davis, Mr. Serrine and myself were elected. The school had hardly been organized, however, when the gold was discovered, and, as you are aware, San Francisco was soon afterwards deserted by all; and there being no children in the place, the first attempt to establish a public school fell through.

Very respectfully yours,
V. J. FOURGEAUD.

In my opinion, the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System of San Francisco belongs to John C. Pelton.

The first Public School was opened in December, 1849; by authority of Town Council; under the superintendence of J. C. Pelton. I have resided here since 1849, and have known Mr. Pelton the entire period.

GEO. H. ENSIGN.

I arrived in this city October 17th, 1850, and soon ascertained that Mr. Pelton was teaching a Free Public School.

REV. S. D. SIMONDS.
[Presiding Elder M. E. Church.]

I have been in this city since July 9th, 1849, and have always understood that J. C. Pelton was the teacher of the first Public School in this city, under American rule, and I believe it true.

J. F. STIRLING.
[Formerly of S. F. Herald.]

[Introductory Letter of T. J. Nevins, (First Superintendent of Public Schools, elected under Third School Act,) to Dr. A. Randall, Assembly, 1851.]

SAN FRANCISCO, ☞ April 10th, 1851. ☜

DR. A. RANDALL: [Assembly.]

Dear Sir,—The bearer, Mr. J. C. Pelton, is the principal of the school first established in this city, and has sustained it from the beginning at great sacrifice and with distinguished ability. He is anxious to get the best possible school system adopted, and now visits the Capital in connection with that object; and any facilities you may be able to afford him in bringing his views and suggestions to the notice of the members of the Legislature will, I have no doubt, tend to the promotion of the best interests of popular education. He proposes some amendments to Mr. Heydenfeldt's bill, which he will explain to you. * * * *

Yours, in haste,

T. J. NEVINS.

NOTE—I have introduced the foregoing and following testimonials in this pamphlet, not for the purpose of establishing the facts by them alone made so apparent: the Public Records, which are here given, are ample for that. I have inserted them, rather, to show the universality of the knowledge of those facts, which have, with such extraordinary perversity. been ignored—and even denied—by the writer of the Nevins Epitaph. It is proper for me to say, too, that these testimonials have been given entirely from memory, in every case—and in most instances, without any knowledge of what the Public Records could and do establish.

The remaining pages of this pamphlet will be found in Parts I, III, IV, V and VI, of "The Origin of the Free Public Schools of San Francisco," and may be obtained at any of the bookstores.

J. C. PELTON.

TESIMONY

OF

REV. F. C. EWER,

FORMERLY RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH, SAN FRANCISCO, AND FOR SOME TIME A MEMBER OF THE CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION.

187 W. Forty-Second Street, New York,*
October 19th, 1864.

To Messrs. Wm. G. Badger, J. F. Pope and D. Lunt, Committee on Common Schools, San Francisco, Cal.:

Gentlemen of the Committee,—I take pleasure in laying before you such information as I have on the early history of the Free School System of your city.

To insure the proper comprehension of that history, I beg to make a preliminary remark. During the eleven years of my residence in California, beginning A. D. 1849, and ending A. D. 1860, your Common School Department had a somewhat varied and singular career. It was not suffered to remain in continuous existence, and thus to expand gradually and calmly from seed to tree. The continuity of its life was broken several times; it felt the destroying and reconstructing hand of Ayuntamiento, Common Council, the political demagogue, and the State Legislature. Each time that it thus passed through death and came

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* Received since rendering of Report. J. C. P.

☞ For preceding and following pages, completing this pamphlet, see Parts I, II and IV, at any of the book stores. J. C. P.

up againin to new life, it issued from the remodelling process with a structure and aspect different from any it had before presented; and each new phase it assumed, save one, was more expanded, more admirable and better adapted to the wants of the day than the phase immediately preceding. Thus, in *strictest* propriety, a memoir of Free Education in San Francisco could not possibly treat of the rise and uninterrupted development of a *one System* with continuous life, but could only consider the subject under the aspect of the rise of the *success in Free School Systems* of your city, and the expansion of each during the brief period of its existence.

But I do not understand you to ask me to state who, in my opinion, should have the credit of modelling any *new* phase which the Department may have assumed, however early such phase may have been; but rather, in your own language, "to whom, in my opinion, belongs the credit of having *inaugurated* the Free School System in your city?"

Your question, then, compels me to consider the life of Free Common Schools in your city, as in some sense a continuous whole from the earliest springs of its being to its present magnificent efficiency; and while not indeed ignoring the breaks that have occurred in its existence, at least to subordinate them to the idea of that continuous whole. Indeed, to be ingenuous in the treatment of the subject, one could hardly, in tracing that life back toward its source, pause at the beginning of any new phase the Department may have assumed, but must go back to the phase preceding, if there be one, until finally the very first is reached.

I proceed, then, to give such information as I possess in answer to the four questions in your postscript, viz:

First.—At what date was the first Free Public School opened?

Reply: 1st—In a bound file of the San Francisco *Pacific News*, in the Historical Department of the Library of Harvard University, and in the issue of that paper, dated December 27th, 1849, I find an article, of which I have since been enabled to procure the following duplicate in this city, viz:

[Extract from the *Pacific News*, December 27, 1849.]

A FREE PUBLIC SCHOOL.

It will be seen by the advertisement which we give below, that a movement in favor of education is about commencing in our midst. MR. J. C. PELTON proposes to open a School in the Baptist Chapel on Washington street, which shall for the present, at least, be free for children of both sexes.

We know nothing further of the gentleman than that he comes among us recommended by Governor Briggs and other friends of education in Massachusetts, for his high moral character, and for that skill in the regulation of a school and in the imparting of instruction, without which no teacher can succeed. We can but express our sincere hope that his laudable efforts may be crowned with success.

The following is his notice, addressed

To the Citizens of San Francisco:

The subscriber proposes to establish in San Francisco, a Free Public School.

In order that the school may be free to all who may be disposed to avail themselves of its privileges, it is proposed to admit free of tuition all who may apply; no other compensation being required at present, than what the friends of the school and the public generally may be disposed to contribute.

It is also proposed, until better arrangements can be made, that the school consist of children and youth of both sexes and of the different ages that usually attend primary and more advanced schools, and that the course of study include those English branches taught in the Public Schools of New England.

The Baptist Chapel, situated on Washington street, has been generously tendered, and a sufficient sum guaranteed to conveniently fit the same for the uses of the proposed school.

The school will commence on Wednesday, the 26th inst.

> Before leaving the States, the subscriber procured, at an expense of much time and pains, an ample supply of the most approved school books, with which those pupils who wish can be supplied at the school room.
>
> The subscriber is permitted to refer to Mr. F. P. Fitts, Mr. Wm. W. Gallaer, Mr. Wm. Hooper, and the Rev. Mr. Wheeler.
>
> The names of the Trustees will appear in a subsequent number of this paper.
>
> J. C. Pelton.

I was at the time about to assume the editorial charge of the paper, and had then been connected with it some ten days. I judge from my diary, that it was about the 22d of December that Mr. Pelton first conferred with me in the editorial rooms on the subject. He stated that he had come out to San Francisco with the intention and under the determination to put into practical effect here the New England idea of Free Schools. I told him I thought the plan premature: that we were all men in San Francisco; and asked him where he expected to find any children to teach? He replied, that there were children enough, as he thought, to form a school. I asked him how he expected to meet his personal expenses, if he devoted all his time to teaching a Free School, and advised him to give up such a Utopian idea, and make a little money. He said he did not come to California for the purpose of making money, but to act in the cause of Education. And after showing me his letters from Gov. Briggs and others, asked only of me that, whatever I might think of the wisdom of his enterprise, I would at least help him along by giving it a favorable notice. There were circumstances, needless to allude to here, which impressed that first conversation vividly upon my mind.

The newspaper appeared on the next day of its issue without any notice; purposely so on my part. Mr. Pelton then called on me again. I regarded him as, to say the least, carried away with one idea. However, I acceded to his request, and penned the above article. The school opened on the 26th day of December, 1849, one day before the issue of the paper containing my notice. It opened in the old wooden Baptist chapel, then standing on the north side of Washington street, just below Stockton street. To my surprise, it soon numbered some seventy scholars. Of course it was then entirely disconnected with the Ayuntamiento; it was a Free Public School, but it was a private undertaking of Mr. Pelton. I understood it from him to be a sort of first step—an entering-wedge, to familiarize the public with the Free School idea; so that, once having their children taught gratuitously for a while, they would eventually be dissatisfied without a Free School System, would demand the adoption of such a system, and so Free Education would become a permanent feature of San Francisco.

The second school* established in the city was started two weeks afterwards, on or about the 15th of January, 1850, by the Rector of Trinity church, the Rev. Flavel S. Mines. It is my impression, however, that it was not a free school. At any rate, it never had any connection with the Public School System of the city, nor, so far as I am aware, any effect, direct or indirect, on the adoption of that system. It may, therefore, drop out of our consideration.

I believe Mr. Pelton soon began to feel, practically, that there were few others in the city as enthusiastic friends of the Free School idea as himself; that while there were many willing enough to send their children to the school, free of expense, there were, on the other hand, few of the wealthy or the prosperous disposed to contribute to the support of himself and family. However, he kept steadily on, spreading his favorite idea, and endeavoring to awaken interest in it. In

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*The writer, of course does not allude to San Francisco's history prior to the gold excitement and the attendant influx of population. There had been several small private schools prior to the establishment of the first Public School, in December, 1849.
J. C. P.

this he met with some little success. But at length his straightened pecuniary circumstances precipitated, at an earlier day than was at first anticipated, an effort to get the school adopted by the city.

On the evening of the 4th of March, 1850, the Ayuntamiento or Town Council of the Pueblo met; and a paper was presented and read, from the Trustees of the Baptist Chapel,[*] which highly commended the Free Public School held therein, "which [I now copy from a report of the proceedings which I happen to have among my papers] by the ability and energy of the teacher, had increased the number of its pupils since its opening in December last, from *three* to one hundred." The paper went on to recommend that the teacher be properly remunerated by the Town Council, and closed with an offer to give the city free use of the Church for a public school, for six months. The whole subject was referred to the "Committee on Education," with instructions to report.[†]

During the changes incident to California life, other documents to which I might refer for positively accurate information as to dates and items, are lost. My memory is a little dim in regard to the matter, but somehow there was a series of resolutions[‡] involved in the question of the adoption of the school by the city, which were offered by Judge Tilford,[*] at that time a member of the Ayuntamiento. These resolutions [the recommendations of Judge H. C. Murray; see the preceding note.—J. C. P.] were to the effect, (I am certain upon *this* point, at any rate) that a portion of land should be appropriated by the pueblo for purposes of a Free School; that the title to it and to such buildings as might be erected thereon for the school, should vest in the city; and that there should be a body of Directors elected by the people to take charge of the school. Whether these resolutions passed or not, I do not call to mind. My impression is, that they did not. I remember to have stirred up the Town Council on two different occasions in relation to the matter; but subsequent absorption in other affairs of personal moment to myself, drove interest in the subject, in some degree, out of my mind. The school was, however, shortly after adopted by the Ayuntamiento, in some shape. This occurred early in April, 1850. If I mistake not, it was on a Monday evening, and one of the first Mondays in April. [April 8th, 1850.]

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[*] O. C. Wheeler, Jno. F. Pope, C. L. Ross and others. J. C. P.

[†] That committee a few days later, on April 8th, reported an "Ordinance for the Regulation and Support of Common Schools," which ordinance, was as follows:

1st Be it ordained by the Common Council of San Francisco, That from and after the passage of this Act it shall be the duty of J. C. Pelton, who has been employed by the Council as a public teacher, to open a school in the Baptist Chapel.

2d. Said school shall be opened from half-past 8 A. M. to 12 M., and from 2 P. M. until 5 P. M., and shall continue open from Monday until Friday at 5 o'clock, P. M.

3d. The number of scholars shall not exceed the number of one hundred; and no scholar shall be admitted under the age of four, or over the age of sixteen.

4th. All persons desirous of having their children instructed in said school shall first obtain an order from the Chairman of the Committee on Education, and all children obtaining said order shall be instructed in said school free of charge.

5th. It shall be the duty of said Pelton to report to the Council on the first of each and every month the number of scholars and the progress of said school.

H. C. MURRAY.
F. TILFORD.

[‡] A written communication of H. C. Murray. See Index, p. 2. J. C. P.

Subsequently, Mr. Pelton seems to disappear from the field of my memory. But, as I remember, his influence was felt. I was connected with the public press; I was watching the public mind and temper; and the momentum, which the Free School idea had gained from the impulse given it by Mr. Pelton, continued, and not long after, opened the way to grander results than he had been able to effect.

Meanwhile, the city had been steadily and rapidly growing. From immigration, a large increase of children had occurred, and the phase in which the Free Public School system had been left by Mr. Pelton, soon became quite inadequate to meet the wants of the advancing times. The knell of that first phase of the system struck.

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[*] Judge Tilford was on the Committee on Education (in the Ayuntamiento) which drew up and presented the "Ordinance for the Regulation of Common Schools;" but it was Judge Murray who presented the Report and recommendations here referred to, which were NOT adopted. Several years later, however, Judge Murray's proposition, in effect, was recommended by Mr. Nevins, myself and others, and adopted by the City Council. Judge N. Holland was chiefly instrumental in consummating this measure. J. C. P.

2d. The whole idea of "Free Public Schools" now took fresh vigor, and bounded into a larger, a different, and a more systematic shape and development, under the hands of Mr. Thomas J. Nevins, a gentleman who had previously been connected with a Tract Society, or with some enterprise for the distribution of tracts. As a consequence of the additional interest infused abroad, either under Mr. Nevins' entire or partial influence and energy, the School Department now assumed a new shape, and a sufficiently thorough organization for the times. That organization, however, like the preceding phase, was to become in time inadequate to the still growing wants of the city, and to fall, partly before the ravages of demagogism, but in other part, and eventually, before the rise of larger demands and of still wider and more expanded ideas.

Under this second phase of the San Francisco Public School System, the Department, instead of comprising simply one Free School (which had been adequate to all wants for a time), comprised several schools bound together into an organization, and governed by a Superintendent and a Board of Education, elected by the Common Council, and having few powers independent of the latter body. The school with which Mr. Pelton had been connected, but which, if I err not, he had left a short time before, passed, not perhaps with all its scholars, but in what might be considered as a continuous and recognizable entity, into the new organization. It did not, however, thus pass in the shape in which it had been left by Mr. Pelton.

For, as in this second phase there were a number of schools bound together, the system of classification in schools appeared as a new feature.*

3d. It was not long, however, before the State Legislature, urged by some demagogue, took a different view from that expressed above, as to the adequacy and adaptability of this second phase of the Free School System to the wants of the community. A law was passed dividing the Public School moneys *pro rata* between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. The consequence of this was a third phase. The San Francisco Public School System was thrown into the shape of a double-headed monster. Two independent School Departments, co-occupying the ground was the result, viz: 1st, What may, for our purposes, be considered as a continuation of the second phase spoken of above, which now became the Protestant Department, governed by a Superintendent and a "Board of Education," elected by the Common Council, and comprising what were known as the "District Schools," seven in number, with an aggregate attendance of 3,347 pupils; and 2d, A Roman Catholic Department, governed by the County Superintendent and a "Board of Commissioners" elected by the people, and comprising what was known as the "Ward Schools," which were, if I remember rightly, eight or ten in number, with an aggregate attendance of 1,421 pupils.

4th. This third monstrous phase was, however, short-lived. In 1855 the State Legislature abolished both systems, and provided that there should again be a radical reörganization of the entire school system of the city, in which no sectarianism should enter as an element. Under this law a Superintendent and a

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* Not quite correct. During the second year of its existence the first Public School was organized in two departments—Grammar and Primary. J. C. P.

Board of Education were elected by the people. Both of the old co-existent systems were swept from being. Considerable difficulty was experienced in so adjusting the claims of different religionists that there should be no sectarian preference shown either for Protestants or Roman Catholics; but the delicate work was at last accomplished, and so a *one* new organization arose all over the city on the ruins of the two which had previously co-occupied the ground. This was the fourth phase in the life of Free Public Education in your city. And from the time of *this* reorganization, the *present* development of your school system dates its birth.

The answer to your second and third questions have unavoidably been involved in the above memoir.

It is not in my power to answer your fourth question, as I never knew anything whatever about the salaries of teachers till the school year 1855–6.*

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Having given the above *resumé*, I am prepared to respond to your main question in the body of your letter, viz: "To whom, in my opinion, belongs the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System in San Francisco?" I reply as follows, viz:

The rise and expansion of the whole system may be compared to the rise and development of a storm, which began with the faintest of flaws, attracting little notice—with a mere ruffle on the surface of the waters; but slowly, gradually swelled, rising on the scale of intensity by taking upon itself now and then sudden bursts of increased violence, till at last it avails to lift the great billows. And, as in tracing back such a storm, we descend through stage, behind stage of lessening intensity, and cannot, without retiring to the first faint flaw, place our finger on the exact moment of time when it began; so in tracing the existence of your Free School System back to the springs thereof, we find ourselves retiring from stage to stage of lessening efficiency and development, till at last the earliest is reached, where that existence lapses away, by insensible degrees, until it vanishes utterly in a new idea and purpose in the brain of *a single man*. Thus, your System did not start full-panoplied into a complete organized existence. In the feebleness and confusion of its origin, in its crisis through which it has bounded into larger and more organized being, it has followed in analogy the career of the city.

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* Mr. Ewer was then a member of the Board of Education. J. C. P.

And such being the facts, I have no hesitation whatever in deciding that the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System of your city, properly, justly and righteously belongs to Mr. John C. Pelton.

It surely belongs to him, who did not wait for public sentiment to form in favor of Free Schools, and for the public thus to be in condition to fall easily into the adoption of the system; but who, on the contrary, nobly threw himself, solitary and alone, into the great work of *creating* such a public sentiment.

It surely belongs to him, who did not wait for a time when "offices," in connection with a Free School Department, and salaries attached thereto would "pay," if looked after; but who, in the brave spirit of the true reformer, plunged into a venture of faith, inaugurated a Free School in the very face, not only of skepticism and neglect, but of starvation itself.

It surely belongs to him, who did not come to California for other or for mere personal purposes to adopt subsequently the Free School idea as a scheme, but who sailed away from the States pregnant with the idea, loaded with books and implements to put it into execution, and who on landing at San Francisco, instantly commenced his great work, and sacrificed his personal interests in its behalf.

It surely belongs to him, who was the first to go around, from man to man, urging the importance of Free Public Schools to the community, and who was the first to besiege the doors of the Press and induce that powerful engine to act through its columns, time after time, in favor of the adoption by the city of the Free School System.

Finally, it surely belongs to him, who, as is matter of historical record here, was the first man that formally brought the subject before the attention of your city authorities, and urged them to action.

Whoever the claimants for the honor are—and I am sure I cannot conceive what other there can possibly be, it seems to me—there can be no doubt whatever that the credit belongs to Mr. Pelton.

And as your Public School System has now become an honor, not only to California but to the whole country, so much the more, if he wishes it, ought that man to have the mooted credit, in whose mind and struggles the whole system finds the earliest springs of its existence; so much the more should there be a monument of some kind to connect *his* name with the San Francisco Free Schools, even though that monument be but one of these schools called after him.

I am, gentlemen of the Committee, with great respect,
Your obedient servant,
F. C. EWER.

P. S.—As this appears to be a matter of public interest, as well as personal interest to Mr. Pelton, I have thought there was no impropriety in my forwarding to him a copy of this letter.

F. C. E.

Following is an extract from a letter written by Col. Nevins himself, in which he awards to J. C. Pelton the credit of having established the first school in San Francisco:

"The bearer, Mr. J. C. Pelton, is the principal of the school first established in this city, and has sustained it from the beginning at great sacrifice and with distinguished ability. He is anxious to get the best possible school system adopted, and now visits the Capital in connection with that object; and any facility you may be able to afford him in bringing his views and suggestions to the notice of the members of the Legislature will, I have no doubt, tend to the promotion of the best interests of popular education.

"He proposes some amendments to Mr. Heydenfelt's bill, which he will explain to you."

"T. J. NEVINS."

[From WM. HOOPER, Esq., formerly Member of the Board of Education.]

SAN FRANCISCO, December 20th, 1864.

TO THE COMMITTEE OF COMMON SCHOOLS:

Gentlemen,—My information relative to the subject matter of your circular letter of the 26th ultimo, received through the post-office this morning, is confined to the following facts:

In April, 1849, Mr. Pelton announced to my brother, in Boston, his intention to embark "in the ship New Jersey, for San Francisco, with the view of commencing a school."

On the arrival of that vessel at this port, he presented me with an introductory letter, dated "Boston, April 28th, 1849," in which I am informed that he "leaves this city in the ship New Jersey, for the purpose of establishing a school." The same ship brought to my consignment a Bell to be presented to the "first Free Grammer School" established in this city.

Mr. and Mrs. Pelton, after experiencing some of the trials and hardships incident to that period of the city's history, finally succeeded in opening a school on Washington street. This school I repeatedly visited.

Whether any of the parents of the children who went to it contributed anything to sustain the school, I am unable to say. My impression is, that it was understood to be free to all.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,
WILLIAM HOOPER.

[From Rev O. C. WHEELER, Pastor First Baptist Church, 1849.]

TO MESSRS. BADGER, POPE, AND LUNT :

Gentlemen,—In the autumn of 1849, J. C. Pelton, brought to me letters from Gov. G. N. Briggs, of Mass.; Dea. Moses Grant, of Boston; Rev. Ed. Beecher, Rev. N. Colver, and others in that State; all uniting in the statement, each in his own terms, that his mission to this coast was the establishment of Free Common Schools, and that he was eminently qualified for the work. The First Baptist Church—of which I was the pastor—acceded to his proposition that if they would allow him the use of their building, he would establish therein and teach a school *free of charge* to all disposed to patronize him on such easy terms. By the unanimous voice of the Society, the church edifice on Washington street, the first built by the Protestants in California, was placed at his disposal, free of rent. He commenced and taught a school on the terms he had proposed, his wife joining him when the school was too large for one. On the petition of citizens, of which I had the honor to be one, the Common Council of San Francisco adopted the school as a Free Public School, and provided for its support and regulation as early as some time in April, 1850; the free school taught by Mr. Pelton and wife having then been in operation since the preceding December. From this germ grew up the entire enterprise, now such a crowning glory to the Pacific Coast, the Free Public School System in San Francisco.

That others contributed our mites or masses of information, and thus essentially aided the development and hastened the enlarged consummation, no more con troverts the fact that Mr. Pelton was its originator and founder, than the fact that Americus attached his name to the new world proves that Columbus did not discover it."

O. C. WHEELER.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Nov. 26th, 1864.

FRIEND PELTON:—Please present this letter to Messrs. Badger, Pope and Lunt, as my certificate of the fact made so plain on all the earlier records of San Francisco, "that he who runs may read," that J. C. Pelton is the man who originated the plan of free schooling in San Francisco. * * * *

Your friend,
J. M. McDOUGALL.

To J. C. PELTON, Esq., San Francisco.

SAN FRANCISCO, August 6th, 1864.

MESSRS. BADGER, POPE, AND LUNT:

Gentlemen,—In my opinion there are no facts better established in the history of education in this State, than that Mr. Nevins did *not* establish the first Free School, and that Mr. Pelton did.

Very Respectfully,
FRANK M. PIXLEY,
A resident of the State since it became a State.

GENTLEMEN OF COMMON SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

We, the undersigned, are sure, of our own knowledge, that the credit of establishing the first Public School in San Francisco, is due to John C. Pelton.

FERDINAND VASSAULT.
J. C. DUNCAN.
N. PROCTOR SMITH.
D. H. HASKELL.
J. W. SULLIVAN.
JAMES FLOOD.
JOHN SHORT, SR.
WM. HAMELL.
J. E. DAVIS.
FRANK WHEELER.
NATHANIEL PAGE.
WM. L. DUNCAN.
JOHN J. HALEY.
WM. MITCHELL.
A. J. BOWIE, M. D.
G. G. HAYDEN.
RICHARD TOBIN.
WM. NORRIS.

CAPT. E. A. POOLE.
JAMES BOWMAN,
[Sec'y to Mayor Geary, 1850.]
DR. GALEN BURDELL,
[Forty-niner.]
T. C. McCALLUM,
[Resident since 1850.]
D. S. DIKEMAN.
G. W. CONKLIN, Pioneer.
M. D. BORUCK.
[Editor Spirit of the Times.]
F. H. WELLS.

I concur in the above.
HALL McALLISTER.

From general knowledge, I approve of the above.
J. W. BINGHAM.

San Francisco, June, 1864.

Gentlemen of Com. School Committee:

We, the undersigned, firmly believe that the credit of inaugurating the Free School System in San Francisco is due to our friend and esteemed citizen, John C. Pelton, Esq.

JNO. A SUTTER,
[The eminent pioneer, a resident of California since 1839.]

O. M. WOZENCRAFT,
[Ex-U. S. Indian Agent.]

SAMUEL PURDY,
[Lieut.-Governor in 1852–3.]

THOS. SHILLABER,
[Formerly of U. S. Navy.]

HARVEY S. BROWN,
[Dist. Att'y in 1862–3.]

M. S. WHITING,
[State Senator in 1862–3.]

R. F. PERKINS,
[Post Master, San Francisco.]

R. M. JESSUP,
[City Council in 1852–3.]

MILO HOODLEY,
[Ex-City and County Surveyor.]

S. W. HOLLIDAY,
[Ex-City Attorney.]

R. S. DORR,
[Alderman in 1851.]

J. R. HARDENBERG,
[Ex-Mayor of Sacramento—now of San Francisco.]

J. SHORT,
[Deputy Sheriff.]

H. H. BYRNE,
[City Attorney in 1850–7.]

J. P. DYER,
[Ex-Mayor of Sacramento—now of San Francisco.]

J. M. BUFFINGTON,
[Ex-Mayor of Stockton—now of San Francisco.]

G. W. GREEN,
[Common Councilman in 1851.]

CHARLES L. WIGGINS,
[Mayor's Clerk, 49er.]

DAN LOUDERBACK,
P. S.—I was a pupil in Mr. Pelton's School, in 1850.
[Now Attorney in Police Court.]

J. H. HESSE,
[10 years on City Police.]

R. P. ROBINSON,
[Clerk Police Court.]

JAMES GRAVES,
[Of City Council in 1854.]

C. E. BUCKINGHAM.
[County Treasurer in 1851.]

H. F. WILLIAMS.
[Ex-Pres't Mechanics' Institute.]

R. M. BRAGDON.
C. W. NICHOLS.
A. R. BIGGS.
A. C. BONNELL.
Wm. MURRAY.
JOHN C. WHITE.
J. B. BADGER.
C. C. HAYDEN.
[Resident since 1849.]

C. T. BALDWIN.
[Resident since June, 1849.]

T. H. HATCH.
CHAS. E. BARRY.
PETER H. WELLER.
J. T. SANBORN.
J. S. FORWALD.
BENJ. D. ALMEY.
[Resident since 1849.]

E. P. CLARK.
Wm. NEIL.
Wm. H. JONES.
JOHN WHITE.
H. T. BURR.
Mr. Pelton was the first teacher known to me as above, in Sept. 1851.]

TESTIMONY

OF

FRANK SOULE AND OTHERS,

Early Members of the San Francisco Press.

To Wm. G. BADGER, J. F. POPE, and D. LUNT, Committee of Board of Education, San Francisco:

GENTLEMEN,—The subscribers have received your circular asking our opinion upon the subject of the Origin of the Common Schools of this city, and to whom is due the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System; and have thought the best method of giving that opinion is through a history of the subject. We therefore make this reply:

Some discussion upon the subject of education was had in this place, then "Yerba Buena," early in the year 1847; but nothing was done by the public or private citizens, except the discussion. In April of that year, a Mr. Martson commenced a private school. It was undoubtedly the first English school in the State. But it was supported by tuition fees, and of course was not a "Free" nor "Common" school. In September following, the first Town Council appointed a committee consisting of Wm. A. Leidsdorff, Wm. Glover, and Wm. S. Clark, to take measures for building a school house. This led to the erection of a school house on the southwest portion of the present Plaza.

On the 21st of February, 1848, a Board of Trustees, consisting of the following named citizens, was elected at a town meeting, viz: Dr. F. Fourgeaud, Dr. J. Townsend, C. L. Ross, J. Serrine and Wm. H. Davis. In March following, they engaged Mr. Thomas Douglass as teacher. His salary was fixed, as were also the *tuition* fees. He commenced his school on the 3d of April. Within about two months from the opening, the school was entirely broken up in consequence of the discovery of gold, the excitement thereupon causing an almost total depopulation of the place. This was a Tuition School, and of course *not* a Free, Common School.

Mr. C. Christian commenced and taught a small school for almost ten weeks in the autumn of 1848. This, too, was a private, tuition school.

Rev. Albert Williams commenced a private school about April 23d, 1849. This school continued until the latter part of September. It was, as stated, a private school, supported by tuition fees, as had been all the previous schools in the place. None of them pretended to be either *Free* or *Common*.

During October, '49, Mr. John C. Pelton arrived here. He had been a teacher at the East, and had left Boston with the avowed purpose, there perfectly understood, of establishing in this city, Free Common Schools. He brought with him letters from Gov. Geo. C. Briggs, Deacon Moses Grant, Henry N. Hooper,* and B. F. Whittemore, of Boston; Revs. Ed. Beecher and N. Colver, and many other prominent gentlemen of Boston and New York, all stating *that* to be Mr. Pelton's mission and purpose. He brought his family with him. A bell designed for his contemplated school, and presented by H. N. Hooper, Esq., of Boston, came on the same ship, but was destroyed in one of our early fires before it could be put in service.

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* See Mr. Wm. Hooper's Letter, page 47. J. C. P.

Soon after his arrival, Mr. Pelton issued his Prospectus. It was published in the "Pacific News," [Dec. 27, 1849,] and in the following words:

To the Citizens of San Francisco:

The subscriber proposes to establish in San Francisco, a Free Public School.

In order that the school may be free to all who may be disposed to avail themselves of its privileges, it is proposed to admit free of tuition all who may apply; no other compensation being required at present, than what the friends of the school and the public generally may be disposed to contribute.

It is also proposed, until better arrangements can be made, that the school consist of children and youth of both sexes and of the different ages that usually attend primary and more advanced schools, and that the course of study include those English branches taught in the Public Schools of New England.

The Baptist Chapel, situated on Washington street, has been generously tendered, and a sufficient sum guaranteed to conveniently fit the same for the uses of the proposed school.

The school will commence on Wednesday, the 26th inst.

Before leaving the States, the subscriber procured, at an expense of much time and pains, an ample supply of the most approved school books, with which those pupils who wish can be supplied at the school room.

The subscriber is permitted to refer to Mr. F. P. Fitts, Mr. Wm. W. Gallaer, Mr. Wm. Hooper, and the Rev. Mr. Wheeler.

The names of the Trustees will appear in a subsequent number of this paper.

J. C. Pelton.

The chapel of the First Baptist Church on Washington street had been procured as a school room, and there punctually on the day as announced, the First Free Common School of San Francisco, was inaugurated. First came one scholar, and in about half an hour afterwards, two more. These constituted the pioneer scholars of the Free School system. Eight years afterwards, in this same room, on occasion of the organization of the California College, Dr. Gibbons alluded to the place as the "holy ground" where the humbler departments of learning had their origin in California.

During the first quarter of Mr. Pelton's school one hundred and thirty pupils were admitted. The free system prevailed through all the period of the school. The rent was given by the Trustees of the church, but all the other expenses of fitting up the room and of teaching, were defrayed by Mr. Pelton, with the exception of a few hundred dollars, which had been contributed by individual friends of the undertaking. Towards the end of the quarter, Mr. Pelton petitioned the City Council to take the school under its control, and to provide means for its support; that is to constitute it a Free Common School as contemplated originally, and conducted by Mr. Pelton, its projector.

The Council were at first willing to appropriate money as a charity to pay for the tuition of the children of the poor, but objected to give it for educating those of the rich. Subsequently, moved by a second petition, (see Municipal Rec. 1849–50, p. 166), headed by Rev. O. C. Wheeler, and signed by other friends of education, the Council on the 29th of March, 1850, adopted a resolution employing Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Pelton, as teachers, and making an appropriation for their support. (see Municipal Records, p. 187.) At their next meeting, April 8th, they passed an "Ordinance for the Regulation of Common Schools," (see Municipal Rec. pp. 200–201,) by which it was made "the duty of John C. Pelton to open a school in the Baptist Church," and to teach all children applying, "free of charge." The average number of scholars was restricted to one hundred, and Mr. and Mrs. Pelton were awarded as a salary, five hundred dollars per month. In accordance with this action of the Council, the school became and remained a recognized Free, Common, Public School, supported and controlled by the city authorities. It was at the time the only one of the kind in this city or in this State. For the chief facts in the foregoing, your Committee are referred to the "Pioneer Magazine" in [illegible] 1851, Editor's Table, pp. 189;* Hutchings' Magazine for June and July, 1859, pp 29; and to the newspapers published in this city during the time of which we have written. Allow us to introduce a few extracts from the many documents which we have at hand.

We will first present a letter from the pen of Mr. T. J. Nevins:

San Francisco, April 10th, 1851.

Dr. A. Randall: [Assembly.]

Dear Sir,—The bearer, Mr. J. C. Pelton, is the principal of the school first established in this city, and has sustained it from the beginning at great sacrifice and with distinguished ability. He is anxious to get the best possible school system adopted, and now visits the Capital in connection with that object; and any facility you may be able to afford him in bringing his views and suggestions to the notice of the members of the Legislature will, I have no doubt, tend to the promotion of the best interests of popular education.

He proposes some amendments to Mr. Heydenfelt's bill, which he will explain to you.

* * * * * * * *

Yours, in haste.

T. J. NEVINS.

San Francisco, April 15th, 1851.

His Excellency John McDougal:

Sir,—Allow me to introduce to you, Mr. J. C. Pelton, who may be justly termed the Pioneer upon education in this new State. He visits the capital upon subjects connected therewith.

Any assistance you may render him will be duly appreciated by

Your obedient servant,

WM. C. HOFF.

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* See those articles in Origin of Public Schools, Part V. J. C. P.

[From Legislative Reports of the Joint Convention of the Legislature, convened for the purpose of electing Trustees of the State Reform School, April, 1860.]

Senator Merritt.—I place in nomination J. C. Pelton, of San Francisco. He is a gentleman who is in every way eminently qualified for the position of Trustee of the State Reform School. I hold in my hand recommendations in his behalf for this place from the Board of Education of San Francisco, and from all the teachers of the various Public School* in San Francisco and Sacramento. I would beg leave to state that Mr. Pelton has been a resident of this State since 1849; that he established the first Public School on the Pacific Coast; that he has been ever since that date, with his family, a resident of this State, and connected in an active manner with the promotion of the educational interests of California. I think that an election to this office is but due to him. It would certainly be but a merited compliment to one who has for years been engaged in faithful and laborious exertions for the advancement of one of the noblest institutions of the land. I hope he will receive this election, which will be a deserved compliment to him, and an honor and a profit to the State.

Mr. Warner.—In rising to support the nomination of Mr. Pelton, I desire to say, sir, that my acquaintance with that gentleman commenced in 1851, when he voluntarily came up to the Legislature of this State, and spent three weeks of his time without remuneration, without asking reward, laboring for the introduction in this State of a system of Common Schools. That system is the present basis of the Common School law. The year following, Mr. Soule, Senator from San Francisco, introduced in some measure the laws in regard to the present Common School system. But, sir, to Mr. Pelton is this State indebted for the introduction of the present system; and more especially is the City of San Francisco indebted to him for that system of Common Schools with which that city has been blessed. And I trust, sir, that this Convention will, in consideration of the services heretofore given to this State by Mr. Pelton, in view of the experience and educated judgment which is required to conduct an institution like the one now proposed, with interests of the system and the greatest good of the State at heart, will place in nomination, will elect the pioneer teacher and the persevering and faithful friend of all educational interests, John C. Pelton.

Mr. Sawyer.—*Mr. President*—I rise to second the nomination of J. C. Pelton for the position of Trustee of the Reform School. Mr. Pelton may be well and properly considered as the pioneer in the business of educating the mind and morals of the people of California. He left Boston in 1849, not with the then all-absorbing view of gathering gold in the rich placers of California, but with a more honorable and nobler purpose of establishing a system of Free Common Schools in this State, and to that end he directed all the remarkable energies of his mind. Ever since that period he and his amiable lady have been engaged in prosecuting their labors in this most useful department of social labor. In the city of San Francisco his labors have been particularly known and appreciated. He came to that city when all was disorder and confusion, and the obtaining of educational privileges was about the last among the things thought of by a rushing population. For the last eleven years he has been constantly occupied either as a teacher or a superintendent of schools in California. This is the first time that his friends have ever asked for anything on his behalf from the State. I hope the nomination will be favorably considered by the Convention—that Mr. Pelton will receive one of the appointments as Trustee.

Extracts from the Early Press of San Francisco.

After receipt of the news that California had been admitted into the Union on the 9th of September, 1850, the people of this city celebrated the act by a procession and other festivites. The *Pacific News* of Nov. 1st, 1850, in its notice of that procession, thus alludes to one portion of it:

> We were much interested to see displayed in the midst of the assembled thousands in the Plaza on Tuesday last, in front of the Speaker's stand, a banner with the inscription thereon: "The First Public School in California."

About that banner were assembled a large number of the scholars of Mr. Pelton, accompanied by him and his assistant teachers, as the *News* stated, the paragraph being too long for publication here. No one *at that time* doubted as *to whom* belonged the credit of establishing the First Free Common School in this city and State.

FROM THE PRESS OF 1850.

[From the San Francisco Journal of Commerce.]

March 5th, 1850.—A petition of citizens to the City Council for remuneration of teacher of the school in the Baptist Church for past services and an appropriation for continuance of the same, was referred to the Committee on Education. [In City Council, March 4th, 1850.]

April 3d, 1850.—We are gratified to see that the City Council has made some provision for sustaining Public Schools in San Francisco. Mr. Pelton's school is taken under the protection of the City Fathers, * *

FROM THE PRESS OF 1851.

[From the Alta California, (Editorial,) Feb. 7, 1851.]

Education in San Francisco.—We visited yesterday the school of Mr. J. C. Pelton and wife, now kept in the Baptist Chapel on Washington street. The school is made up of about one hundred and sixty little boys and girls, between the ages of four and fifteen, and gathered from every portion of the civilized world.

* * * * * * * * *

Mr. Pelton commenced the school in the month of December, 1849, with three scholars. No provision had been made for its support, and Mr. Pelton supported it from his own pocket and the donations of friends till April in the following year, when the Town Council voted him a salary of five hundred dollars a month for its support. From that time to this, the school has been flourishing, so far as success in education is concerned. Still, Mr. Pelton is obliged to pay all current expenses from his own pocket, receiving his pay in city scrip. The school is entirely a public one, no charge having been made to parents for the instruction of their children.

* * * * * * * * *

Some action ought to be taken by our City Council, in our present unsettled state, for the permanent continuance of this school.

* * * * * * * * *

We sincerely hope that the highly meritorious *plans* of Mr. Pelton and his wife will not be allowed to fail for want of proper support from our municipal government.

For several months, Mr. Pelton supported the school entirely from his own funds and labor, receiving nothing in return. * * *

After a while, the Council came most generously to his support, voting for the labor of himself and his lady the munificent sum of five hundred dollars in city scrip, *id est*, two hundred and fifty dollars each per month for performing the most wearisome labor to be found in the whole round of manual and mental slavery. They were educating the city's children, working every day, and were voted less by the Council for their labor than any good cook about town was receiving. This five hundred dollars in scrip is now worth to Mr. Pelton one hundred and sixty-two dollars in cash. His expenses, meanwhile being one hundred and eighty dollars per month, besides the labor of himself and wife. While the Council voted him this pittance for laboring twenty-six days, all day, they voted themselves, for two hours work, weekly, a salary of twice the amount. * *

Mr. Pelton's school now numbers between one and two hundred scholars—about one hundred and forty-five, we understand—none of whom pay him anything. He is obliged to employ assistance, which absorbs all that he receives from the city. Nothing comes from the State. He has exhausted nearly all his own means in his most philanthropic labors, and unless some measures be taken the undertaking so praiseworthy must close for want of support. We cite this case to show that the Legislature cannot move too soon in this matter. The cause of education is suffering by their delay. Let it be remedied as soon as possible.

[From Alta California, Feb. 28th, 1851.]

Public Schools and Instruction.—There is a free school in this city, under the charge of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Pelton, whose public spirit and love for the rising generation are worthy of all praise. They commenced this school some *fifteen months since.* * * * *

[From the Alta California, March 1st. 1851.]

Public School Statistics.—We have received from Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Pelton the following report, containing some very interesting statistics, (for these Statistics see Index Statistics) of the public school taught by them in this place. They exhibit a curiously mixed population in our good city. They exhibit a good feeling and desire for the education of their children among all classes amongst us; and more than all, they exhibit an interest—an application, on the part of the teachers, who have forced their way over almost insurmountable difficulties, such as is seldom found in this gold-seeking country. * * * * *

[From the Alta California, (Editorial,) March 3d, 1851.]

Children and Education in California.—Where fifteen months since, the sweet voice of childhood, its ringing laugh, and merry chatter, was a sound as scarce as pleasant, hundreds of gamboling boys and girls are now seen and heard, making their echoes dance again.

Mr. Pelton urges the establishment of more Free Public Schools.

[From the California Courier, March 1st, 1851.]

The Public Schools.—We are happy to hear that the appeals made through the press on Friday, in behalf of the [Mr. Pelton's] Public School, have aroused a proper feeling in the community on the subject.

[From the Alta California, (Editorial,) March 13th, 1851.]

Justice to the Deserving.—Almost a year and half ago, Mr. J. C. Pelton and his excellent lady commenced a free school in this city. To it they devoted time, talents and money. They taught and supported the school entirely at their own expense for four months. Last April, they were allowed for their united labors $500 per month, in city scrip, certainly not a very high salary if paid in cash. Mr. Pelton has expended for current expenses of the school about $900. He has lost on the scrip $3,700. To raise means for continuing the school he has mortgaged his house and lot, besides expending all his other means.

* * * * * * * * *

His ambition has been a noble one, his efforts untiring, his reward disappointment and pecuniary difficulties, if not ruin. His wife has taught and suffered in common with her husband, until nerves and mind can endure the toil and anxiety no longer.

We will not dwell upon this painful subject. These facts the public should know, that it may know how to act, in view of Mr. Pelton's exigencies. He and his lady have acted with as much philanthropy as the great Howard, and we have confidence enough in the correct feeling of the people to believe that they will do for him what the Council of the city has not yet done, and we fear will not do.

[From the California, (Editorial,) March 14th, 1851.]

A Word with the People.—We ask the earnest attention of every good citizen to a few words upon a subject of vital interest, not only to the people collectively, but of paramount individual importance.

* * * * * * * * *

This subject, unfortunately, amid the press of business, has escaped the serious attention of the greater portion of our citizens. There have been some among us, however, who appreciating the importance of the field, have striven earnestly for its cultivation. Foremost among these, were Mr. J. C. Pelton and his excellent lady, who commenced a free school in this city *a year and a half ago.* To it they have devoted time, talent, energy, health and money, with a self-sacrificing spirit rarely equalled. For several months they supported their school entirely at their own expense. In April last, the City Council voted them a small salary, paid in city scrip. This he cannot dispose of at any price worth naming. He has been compelled in some instances to pay an amount of interest on money for the use of the school more than equal to the value of the scrip. Still they have struggled on. Hundreds of children have received daily instruction at their hands. To the fond expectation that our City Fathers would realize the hopes held out to him, Mr. Pelton has mortgaged his dwelling-house, and expended all his other means, for the purpose of carrying on the good work. * * * *

Citizens of San Francisco, this is no fancy sketch. We have had personal opportunity to witness the praiseworthy efforts of these public spirited individuals. We know that they deserve some other reward than ruin. Shall they not have it? Shall the tidings be sent to the Atlantic and to Europe, that San Francisco, with its millionaires and all its boasted wealth, permit so shameful a desertion of the self-sacrificing school-teachers!

[From the Public Balance, (Leader,) March 14th, 1851.]

Mr. J. C. Pelton, some eighteen months since established a school which he intended as the foundation of a system of popular education in this city. * * * * * * * *

[From the California Courier, (Editorial) March 18th, 1851.]

Mr. Pelton's School.—Of one thing we are certain, that if devotion, sacrifice, and persevering effort can accomplish anything, Mr. Pelton and his lady will never abandon the cause they have so zealously espoused.

FROM THE PRESS OF LATER DATES.

[From the Times and Transcript, Sept. 4th, 1855.]

* * Mr. Pelton is entitled to the honor of being called the "Founder of Free Schools on the Pacific." * * His was the first school opened in San Francisco; and to it, the few children then here, resorted without money and without price. By the aid of some philanthropists, in part, but more particularly by the untiring exertions of himself and wife, he was enabled to build up a monument which is now a pride to, but will hereafter become the glory, of our State.

[From the San Francisco Directory for 1858.]

Education and the Public Schools.—Prominent among the early friends of San Francisco were Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Pelton, who, as it appears, left Boston, Mass., in the early part of 1849; and (strange as it then appeared to those unacquainted with them, or the *real* motives that prompted their acts,) with the object of establishing here on the "far-off shores of the Pacific," a free Public School on the New England plan.

[From Hutching's California Magazine, June, 1859, page 576.]

Free Schools in California.—One fact that should ever be kept in grateful remembrance by the friends of the young in California is this: *Mr. Pelton has the honor of being the founder of the first School in California*, nearly ten years ago; and one of the most pleasing features of the Festival* was that of a young lady, who being one of the three pupils of Mr. Pelton's first school, having completed her studies, stepped forward and presented to the school a beautiful silk banner, the work of her own hands, as a memorial of her grateful esteem. Such events must have struck deep into the heart of their earnest teacher, as in language the most forcible and impressive they whispered, "these are thy rewards."

[From the Home Journal, May, 1860.]

Mr. Pelton has been in California eleven years, where he has been the constant advocate and zealous supporter of the cause of education during the whole term of his residence, which of course dates from the early pioneer times.

[From the Herald, May 5th, 1860.]

Last night the many friends and pupils of Mr. J. C. Pelton thronged the re-union, got up in compliment to that gentleman at Tucker's Academy of Music. It was a well-merited compliment to a gentleman who has the credit of being the first public school teacher in California, and one whose services have been indorsed by the Legislature of his State in making him superintendent of the Reform School.

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* May-Day Festival of Hyde Street School, 1859. J. C. P.

[From the San Francisco Herald, May 9th, 1860.]

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION—RESIGNATION OF MR. J. C. PELTON.—The following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS, Mr. J. C. Pelton, who has been for more than *ten years* connected with the Public Schools of the City and County of San Francisco, has resigned from the department; therefore

Resolved, &c., &c.

[It will be seen that the above bears date May 9th, 1860. "More than ten years" preceding that date would bring my connection with the Public Schools of San Francisco back to the early part of 1850. Thus the Board of Education *itself fixes the time* of the institution of the system, *who* was connected with it as a teacher, and so answers one or more of the questions propounded by their Committee.—J. C. P.]

[From a letter from the Hon James Wilson, to J. C. Pelton in 1857.]

I know nothing in relation to the schools of this city in 1849, having arrived here on the thirty-first day of October, 1850. I did not come ashore from the steamer until the morning of November 1st, 1850. Not long after my arrival, I observed one day a procession of school children passing along Kearny street and crossing the Plaza at the corner of Clay street. The matter excited my observation, and I remarked at the time that the gentleman and lady who were engaged in that enterprise, were more important persons than all the office holders in the State of California, and were doing more for the public weal and future prosperity of the State, than all the rest put together.

I am of the same opinion still. That little procession, which I then observed, was under the conduct and direction of yourself and your good lady. May God prosper you in the noble enterprise.

[From the Hon. J. J. Warner, of Los Angeles, a member of the Senate in 1850-51, and of several Legislatures succeeding, and a member of the Assembly during the session of 1860-61. Extract from a letter to J. C. Pelton, when about visiting the Atlantic States, in 1860.]

The deep interest and untiring zeal displayed by you in creating our free school system, since your first arrival in California, and the voluntary assistance which, in 1851, you gave to the Legislature in forming the school laws of California, together with your continued efforts in perfecting and carrying into practical operation the systems of public schools of this State, has placed not only the State, but the rising as well as the future generations of California, under many and deep obligations to you.

Having been an inmate of your family in the year 1849, and an eyewitness to your severe struggles in maintaining a *Free Common School*, it seems to me an act of simple justice, not only to yourself but to the public, to declare the same.

Your grand object and aim was, as I was informed by yourself, to establish *free schools* in this city, and in California; and in order to accomplish this most honorable enterprise, many other persons besides myself, can remember how many sacrifices and deprivations you submitted to. It seemed at that time wonderful, how a man with a family and limited means, could undertake and carry through such an enterprise, in the face of so many obstacles which presented themselves to be met and overcome. But your devotion to the cause of education carried you through, and whatever may have been the merit of others, I think you deserve the credit having established the *first Free Common School* in San Francisco.

[Extract from a letter from Wm. Newton Meeks to J. C. Pelton, 1857.]

The first Public School in this place of which I have any knowledge personally, was that instituted by yourself on Washington Street near Dupont.

We think that the foregoing extracts and documents most conclusively answer each and all of the questions propounded by your Committee, as follows:

1st. At what date was the first Free Public School opened? *Ans.* December 26th, 1849.

2d. By what authority was it established? *Ans.* By John C. Pelton, and subsequently, viz: on the twenty-ninth of March, 1850, adopted by the Common Council of San Francisco.

3d. By whom was it taught? *Ans.* By John C. Pelton and wife.

4th. What amount of salary did the teacher receive? *Ans.* Five hundred dollars per month.

FRANK SOULE,
Of Alta California in 1850 and 1851, and Member of California Senate, Session of 1852.

LOUIS R. LULL,
Of California Courier 1850, and San Francisco Whig 1851 and 1852, and now Secretary Society of California Pioneers.

CHARLES S. BIDEN,
Of Alta California, January to June, 1850, subsequently in Board of Supervisors 1861-62, and President of the Fire Delegates.

W. B. FARWELL,
Of S. F. Whig, 1852 and 1853, and at present Deputy Collector of the Port of San Francisco.

EDWARD CONNER,
Of the Alta California from 1850 to 1856, and late U. S. Consul at Panama.

WM. HUEFNER,
Of the German Journal, 1852 and 1853, and German Democrat 1854, up to present time.

HENRY B. LIVINGSTON,
Editor of Sacramento Index, 1850 to 1851; Sacramento Union, 1851 to 1856; Legislative Correspondent of Alta California in Vallejo and Benecia, 1850 to 1852; Alta California Editor and Legislative Correspondent from 1856 to 1864.

JONAS WINCHESTER,
Early Editor of the Pacific News.

RASEY BIVENS,
'49' Stockton Daily Post, &c.

BENJAMIN HILLIARD,
Reporter.

I have always been under the impression that the above facts are correct, and have frequently made mention of the same.

M. M. NOAH,
1853, of Times and Transcript, and Golden Era; 1854 and now of the Alta California.

I have always understood that Mr. John C. Pelton established the first Public School in the city of San Francisco.

M. G. UPTON,
Editor of Alta California.

The above facts seemed to be settled at the time of my connection editorially with the San Francisco Whig, 1851.

J. A. MAGAGNOS.

Many of the facts stated above I knew personally, and the others are in agreement and according to my general impression.

S. D. SIMONDS,
Editor of the California Christian Advocate, October, 1851 to May, 1856, excepting only a few months editing the Alta California, 1855, recently Presiding Elder P. M. E. Church.

It has always been my understanding that Mr. Pelton established the first School in the city of San Francisco.

M. D. BOBUCK,
Editor Spirit of the Times.

My impression, from what I have read and heard is that, in the early years of San Francisco, the credit of having established the first Public School was universally accorded to J. C. Pelton. I have been a resident of California since 1849, and have rumaged about considerably in the newspapers of this city published previously to 1850.

J. S. HITTELL.
[Author.]

I have been a resident of California since 1849, and it was my impression that Mr. Pelton established the first Public School in San Francisco.

W. N. J. BROOKS,
Formerly connected with Post and Times.

The facts above stated are correct, as I have known Mr. Pelton in his connection with the schools, and personally since the early part of 1850.

JOHN B. WARD,
Reporter for San Francisco in 1850, '51 and '52.

I became aware of Mr. Pelton's efforts in the inauguration of the free school system while I was reporting for the California Courier, early in 1851.

G. H. SIMONTON.

I know the above statements to be generally true, I having been a resident of San Francisco from February, 1849, had children attending Mr. Pelton's school in '50, and having my attention directed to educational matters as a member of the city press much of the time since 1855.

H. DEGROOT.

My impression has always been, that Mr. and Mrs. Pelton opened the first public school in San Francisco.

E. A. UPTON.
Of the California Courier, 1850.

P. S.—In this connection it may be proper to state some facts in regard to the schools and school laws of the State.

In the Convention at Monterey in 1849, which formed the State Constitution, the 500,000 acres of land donated by Congress for internal improvement purposes, was devoted to schools. Hon. John McDougal was eminently the friend of this measure. [See Debates on the Constitution.] During the session of the Legislature of 1851, at San José, a bill for establishing Common Schools was introduced by Hon. Elcan Heydenfeldt, and passed. Mr. Pelton was occupied several weeks in San José engaged in efforts towards perfecting and securing the passage of that bill. [See Letter of T. J. Nevins and others, quoted above.] This law having proved defective on account of the new conditions of society, and the want at the time of drawing the bill, of the school laws of other States, which could not be obtained here, it was deemed necessary to supercede it by another during the session of the Legislature of 1852, at Sacramento. The perfection of this bill cost the Chairman of the Committee on Education of the Senate, together with the State Surperintendent of Common Schools, Judge Marvin, and Hon. Paul K. Hubbs, of the Senate, much of their spare time for months. After its introduction, having been scrutinized, and amended only in a few unimportant particulars, it passed unanimously in each House. The gentlemen last named were aided in the preparation of the bill by Mr. Nevins and by Mr. Pelton, the latter visiting Sacramento several times during the session to give the aid of his experience in drawing it, as well as to secure its passage; and Mr. Nevins making one visit and having one interview with the three sponsors named, for a similar purpose. Their assistance was very valuable, and gratefully received.

Since then there has been considerable legislation upon the subject, but the laws of 1851 and 1852 were and remain the basis of those now existing.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

FRANK SOULÉ.

July 18th, 1864.

☞ For preceding and following pages, completing this pamphlet, see PARTS I, II, III, V and VI, at any of the book stores. J. C. P.

TESTIMONY

OF

EARLY RESIDENTS

OF SAN FRANCISCO.—Continued.

BROOKLYN, ALAMEDA Co., August 1st, 1864.

Messrs. WM. G. BADGER, J. F. POPE and D. LUNT :

Gentlemen,—The preceding circular having been sent me, though without my address, I presume an answer from me is expected. I respond with greater cheerfulness, from the fact that certain parties, *and even some former members of your Board*, have, much to my surprise, attempted to wrest from the proper individual the credit of being the founder of our Common Schools in this State, whether from want of correct information or improper motives, it is not for me to say.

I have no hesitation in asserting, from personal knowledge of the facts, that "the credit of having inaugurated the Free School system in San Francisco," unquestionably belongs to Mr. John C. Pelton.

In answer to your first question, as to the date of the opening of the first *public* school—it was about the 1st of April, 1850.* To the second—It was established by the authority of the Common Council of San Francisco. Third—It was taught by Mr. Pelton and his wife, with some other assistant teachers, during a portion of the time; and fourth—The salary of Mr. and Mrs. Pelton, jointly, as established by the Council, was five hundred dollars [scrip] per month.

My personal knowledge of school matters in the city extends no further back than the fall of 1849; but I have information from earlier pioneers, who were officially connected with the previous schools, that they were all supported by tuition fees, and are consequently, notwithstanding the assertions of some recent newspaper writers, excluded from the category of Free Common Schools. In support of my answer to the question in the body of your circular, "to whom in your opinion belongs the credit of having inaugurated the free school system in this city," it may be proper for me to state that, in the spring of 1849, I embarked from Boston on a Cape Horn voyage to California in company with Mr. and Mrs. Pelton, and that I was cognizant of the fact that his special object in coming here was to establish Free Common Schools, on the New England plan; that he was countenanced and encourged in this laudable work by prominent friends of education at the East; that, to this end, he received from them liberal donations of school-books, etc.; that, among the benefactions, in furtherance of the object, was the donation to San Francisco, by H. N. Hooper, Esq., of Boston, of a large bell, cast expressly for the purpose, and bearing the inscription, "Presented to the First Public Grammar School of San Francisco," to be placed in the belfry of the first Public Grammar School House that should be erected in the city;—that on Mr. Pelton's arrival, in the fall of '49, there was no school of any description, in the city, and so far as I could learn, none contemplated; that, soon after his arrival, viz., December 26th, (there being no public provision for the support of a school,) he opened one on the *free* plan, relying, for the time, on voluntary contributions of citizens. This school was continued on this basis until about the 1st of April following, when the Common Council passed an ordinance, [according to my recollection] "*An Ordinance regulating Common Schools.*" This ordinance adopted Mr. Pelton's school, provided for its support, and established rules for its regulation. This school appears to me to have possessed all the features of a Free Public School, and answered all the purposes of the time perhaps as well as would our now more matured system, which the wants of a vast increase of scholars have called into existence. It was continued as a city public school, under the charge of Mr. Pelton, until the latter part of the summer of '51, when a more elaborate ordinance was adopted, and more schools established.

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* The date of the passage of the ordinance adopting Mr. Pelton's School.

It may be of some interest to you to learn the history of the bell alluded to above. It was hung in a convenient place on the ship's deck, and was used ed during the voyage in ringing the watches, which was destined to be its only service. After arriving here, and while waiting for the erection of a house for its reception in Cross, Hobson & Co's warehouse, it was destroyed by the great fire of 1851.

With much respect, your obt. servant,

MADISON HAWES.

MESSRS. WM. G. BADGER, J. F. POPE, and D. LUNT:

Gentlemen:—In answer to your circular, I beg leave to say, that I am perfectly satisfied that J. C. Pelton was the first teacher in the first Free Public School of this city, and to his efforts the first Common School owes its origin.

I, personally, with other old citizens, were, at the solicitation of Mr. Pelton, subscribers to an amount sufficient to purchase nearly all the furniture of the first Public School, under J. C. Pelton.

J. D. STEVENSON.

Mr. Pelton's name is blended with my earliest recollections of the Public Schools in San Francisco.

WM. T. COLEMAN.

[From the Hon. John Curry, of the Supreme Court.]

SACRAMENTO, Sept. 5th, 1864.

MESSRS. BADGER, POPE AND LUNT:

Gentlemen,—Your letter, asking me to whom in my opinion the credit is due for the inauguration of the Free School System in San Francisco, was received a few days ago. I will state what I know in as few words as may be, and will ask you to accept such statement, instead of my opinion, as to whom belongs the credit of inaugurating our beneficent system of free schools.

I was a resident of San Francisco from early in October, 1849, until August 1851. Sometime in November, or December, 1849, I became acquainted with J. C. Pelton, Esq., who, with his wife, was then engaged in teaching a school. I felt an interest in their enterprise, and from time to time, during the period I have named, conversed with him on the subject of schools and concerning the establisment of the free school system, which, since then, has been carried into successful operation, not only in San Francisco, but throughout the State. In the earliest days of my residence in San Francisco, Mr. Pelton was the only man whom I knew to be devoting himself entirely to the cause of common or public school education. I remember well, that I regarded him as sacrificing the golden opportunity, as I then esteemed it, to make a competence, if not a fortune, for the good of the few children then in San Francisco, and also in the buildnig up of a system of education that would prove a blessing to the generations of children to come; for all of which labor he was receiving but a small pecuniary renumeration.

What others may have done at a later day, I am not particularly well advised, for I ceased to be a resident of San Francisco in August, 1851, and did not return to reside there again until early in 1861. I am aware that much has been done, and that many have been engaged in and contributed to the great and good work, to whom credit is due, which should be gratefully accorded by every friend of man, and of society, and free government.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN CURREY.

Mr. Pelton was the first person that I knew to be engaged as above. I have had a residence in this city since October, 1849.

H. D. COGSWELL. [M. D.]

[From Hon. S. C. Hastings, First Chief Justice Supreme Court of California.]

SAN FRANCISCO, August 29th, 1864.

MESSRS. BADGER, POPE AND LUNT :

I believe the first Free Public School in this city was opened in the latter part of 1849 or earlier part of 1850. I do not know by what authority it was established, but believe it was a private enterprise. It was taught by J. C. Pelton, Esq. I am not informed as to his salary ; if I ever knew, have forgotten.

I have ever supposed, to Mr. Pelton belongs the credit of inaugurating the Free School System of this city. Yours, etc.

S. C. HASTINGS.

SAN FRANCISCO, July 7, 1861.

MESSRS. BADGER, POPE, AND LUNT :

Gentlemen,—I am in receipt of your circular of the — of June, in which you submit a few questions in regard to the establishment of Public Schools in this city.

To the first, as to whom, in my opinion, "belongs the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System," I would answer, J. C. Pelton. If my memory serves me right, Mr. Pelton was teaching school under a canvass tent on Washington street, as early as November or December, 1849 ; but I am unable to state the authority, or system, under which he conducted his establishment at that period.

The present form of city government was adopted in the following year, (1850,) when some provisions were made for the establishment of Free Schools. This was the first official or public movement towards the system of Public Schools. There were small schools here, even before Mr. Pelton's time, but until the middle, or latter part of 1850, I know of none that claimed to be *free*, or partook of a public character.

During the year 1850 and 1851, my connection with the Press brought me in frequent communication with Mr. Pelton, whom I then, and for years afterwards, recognized as the leading spirit of the Public School System, inaugurated under the auspices of the new city government.

Mr. Pelton was a hard worker, indefatigable and *persistent*; to this latter quality in his character I have had reason often to complain. With this slight experience, to which I may add the fact of not having heard any other name mentioned in connection with Public Schools in early days, I must, as I have already done, answer your questions in favor of Mr. Pelton.

Very respectfully yours,
EDWARD CONNER.
[Late U. S. Consul at Panama.]

SAN FRANCISCO, September 14th, 1864.

TO MESSRS. BADGER, POPE AND LUNT:

* * * * * * *

Gentlemen,—Late in 1850 or early in 1851, I was made aware by Mr. Pelton, of his purposes and efforts in furtherance of Common School education in this city. Feeling a lively interest in the general subject, especially in the then condition of this city and State, I had several interviews with him, and was quite favorably impressed by his earnestness, intelligence and energy.

From all my opportunities of information and best recollection, I should say decidedly, that he was the very first person whose labors in the cause, had any tangible result.

I cannot answer your questions more definitely.

Yours, &c.,
EUGENE CASSERLY.

SAN FRANCISCO, August 22d, 1864.

TO COMMITTEE ON COMMON SCHOOLS:

Gentlemen,—H. G. Langley's Directory, for 1858, page 35, contains an interesting account of the establishment of the first Free Public School, by Mr. and Mrs. Pelton, and the names (see Index, p. 2, Contributors) of many citizens who helped to maintain it.

From this, we would infer, at least:

1st. The first *Free* Public School was opened December 26th, 1849.

2d. It was, in the beginning, probably a *private* enterprise.

3d. Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Pelton, were the first teachers, and to them, more especially, belongs the credit of inaugurating the Free School system.

4th. $500 per month, for both, was the amount of compensation, paid in city scrip.

Yours, respectfully,
JOHN Q. ADAMS.
A pupil of the First Public School in 1850.

MESSRS. BADGER, POPE AND LUNT:

Dear Sirs,—My attention was drawn to the first school I know of in San Francisco, while passing the Baptist church on Washington street one morning, I think, early in 1850. I saw the scholars there sitting on high seats—feet some inches from the floor. I was informed that Mr. Pelton collected the scholars and carried on the school without any compensation. I was much interested in the school and intended to contribute something for its support; whether I did or not I cannot now remember.*

Sometime in the summer of 1851, Mr. Pelton applied to me for the use of the First Congregational Church, corner of Jackson street and Virginia Place, which he occupied for some two or three months. There being objections made by a few to its further use as a school, and Mr. Pelton not being able to find any other suitable place, disbanded for a time.

Respectfully, yours,
[Deacon] SAMUEL ADAMS.

TO COMMITTEE OF COMMON SCHOOLS:

Gentlemen,—I know Mr. J. C. Pelton was the first man to inaugurate Free Schools in the city of San Francisco.

Yours, respectfully,
C. A. HOWARD, "47er."

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*Mr. Adams did donate a small sum of money, and a large amount of encouragement.
J. C. P.

NEW YORK, November 15th, 1864.*

TO THE COMMITTEE ON COMMON SCHOOLS:

Gentlemen,—Your favor of the 28th was duly received. In reply to your inquiries with regard to Free Public Schools in San Francisco, in the years 1849 and 1850, I have to state that the first Free Public School opened in that place, was by J. C. Pelton, either late in November or first of December, 1849. It was held in the Baptist church, (Rev. Mr. O. C. Wheeler, pastor, on Washington street, said church being secured by Mr. Pelton for this purpose,) and taught without salary by Mr. Pelton until the spring of 1850, when the Ayuntamiento resolved to engage him and his wife as teachers, at $250 per month, each. I think the school opened with three scholars, and aside from some little assistance by subscription to purchase desks, stoves, etc., the credit of starting, teaching, and supporting the first Free Public School in San Francisco, is due to, and will, I trust, ever be accorded to J. C. Pelton.

With kind regards to Mr. Pelton,
I am, very respectfully, yours,
F. P. FITTS.

SAN FRANCISCO, December 20th, 1864.*

TO THE COMMITTEE ON COMMON SCHOOLS:

Gentlemen,—I have received your printed communication, and in answer, I will say I have been in San Francisco nearly fifteen years. I consider, and it is generally thought by the citizens, that Mr. Pelton was the first teacher of Free Schools here. * *

Yours, respectfully,
J. C. BELL.

August 26th, 1864.

TO MESSRS. BADGER, POPE AND LUNT:

Gentlemen,—In my opinion, the credit of inaugurating the Free School system in San Francisco, belongs to J. C. Pelton. The first Public School was established prior to March, 1851. I believe it was at first a private enterprise of Mr. Pelton, and taught by Mr.

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* Received since rendering of Report. J. C. P.

Pelton and his wife. At first they received no salary, (after a while were paid by the city,) but depended upon the establishment of a Public School system—which Mr. Pelton inaugurated. Two of my children attended the first School.

Yours, respectfully,
FRANCIS A. BONNARD.

PRESIDIO, January 7th, 1865.

Messrs. BADGER, POPE and AYER:

Gentlemen,—In reply to your circular I can give you a fact, that in my judgment settles the question. In May, 1850, I was invited by Mrs. James Ludlow to visit a Free School on Washington street, kept by Mr. and Mrs. Pelton. On our way, we called on a butcher, in what is now Pine street, and the kind hearted lady made the remark, that she would send a joint to the teachers, for they had a very poor time of it, as was very evident.

I remain, gentlemen, yours, respectfully,
MARY F. BALL.

SAN FRANCISCO, August 20th, 1864.

MESSRS. WM. BADGER, J. F. POPE, AND D. LUNT:

Gentlemen:—In reply to the foregoing Circular, I can only state that my earliest recollection of the Free Schools of San Francisco, is of the School established by Mr. J. C. Pelton and wife, in the latter part of 1849 or early in 1850, and which School, I believe, in the Spring of 1850 was adopted by the city, and sustained under its pecuniary aid.

ALFRED WHEELER,
City Attorney 1857.

In my opinion the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System of San Francisco belongs to John C. Pelton.

The first Public School was opened in December, 1849, adopted by the Council April, 1850; under the superintendence of J. C. Pelton. Opened in the Baptist Church on Washington Street.

GEO. W. KNOX, [Notary Public.]

* Received since rendering of Report. J. C. P.

I have been a resident of San Francisco since July 6th, 1849, and I believe Mr. J. C. Pelton to have been the first person engaged in keeping a Public School here.

CHAS. P. KIMBALL. [Noisy Carrier.]

COMMITTEE ON COMMON SCHOOLS:

Gents,—In answer to your several inquiries solicited, I answer as well as my recollection serves me: In the winter of '49 and '50, J. C. Pelton and wife opened a school on Washington street, near Stockton, supported at first by private subscription; subsequently the City Council allowed them each, three hundred dollars in three per cent. city scrip per month for their services.*

The first† [?] public school (properly so) [?] was opened in what was known as Happy Valley, in a one-story, rough-board building, known as Mellus' Hyde House, and stood near where Mission and Second streets now intersect. Mr. Denman, I think was the teacher.

Respectfully,
CALEB HYATT.

GENTLEMEN:

My impression is and always has been, since January, 1850, that Mr. Pelton taught the first school in San Francisco, and that it was opened at his own expense as a Free School.

H. M. HALE.
[City and County Auditor.]

SAN FRANCISCO, August 8th, 1864.

GENTLEMEN:

The undersigned has resided in San Francisco since December, 1849, and states, of his own knowledge, that a Free Public School was kept in the Baptist Chapel, Washington street, early in the year 1850, by John C. Pelton and wife; he does not know of any other Public School being organized prior to said date.

H. J. WELLS.

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*Slightly incorrect; two hundred and fifty dollars was the sum. J. C. P.

†There were other Public Schools opened in San Francisco on the same date with this, Nov. 7, 1851. How, then, could this be the FIRST? J C. P.

San Francisco, July 30th, 1864.

Messrs. Wm. G. Badger, J. F. Pope, and D. Lunt:

Gentlemen,—In answer to your Circular from the Department of Public Schools, permit me to say, that if common notoriety from the earliest history of our State, is creditable evidence of a fact, then Mr. J. C. Pelton is certainly entitled to the distinguished honor of having inaugurated the "Free School" System in this city.

Respectfully,
Wm. M. ZABRISKIE.

San Francisco August 6th, 1864.

Geo. H. Peck, of his information and belief, says that Mr. J. C. Pelton was the Pioneer Public School Teacher of San Francisco, and of this State.

G. H. PECK.

San Francisco, Cal., July 27th, 1864.

Messrs. Badger, J. F. Pope, and D. Lunt, Committee of the Board of Education.

Gentlemen,—One of your Circulars of June, 1864, has reached my hands.

I arrived in San Franciseo in the month of December, 1849.

In February, 1850, I was informed that a Free Public School was established on Washington Street near Stockton Street, Mr. John C. Pelton, Principal. During that month and that succeeding, I sent my son to that School, not doubting that it was established by authority of the Ayuntameinto of the city. No tuition bills were ever presented to me.

Very respectfully, yours,
D. H. T. MOSSE.

I was a pupil of Mr. John C. Pelton, at the school mentioned above by my father. I had no doubt then, nor have I now that it was a Free Public School by authority.

D'ALOA MOSSE.

The first Public School was opened in 1850; by authority of City Council; under the superintendence of J. C. Pelton.

JAMES HUGHES.

In my opinion the credit of having inaugurated the Free School Sytem of San Francisco belongs to John C. Pelton.

The first Public School was opened in the winter of 1849 and 1850; under the superintendence of John C. Pelton.

JAMES G. DOW.

San Francisco, July 6th, 1864.

To the Committee on Common Schools:

Gentlemen,—In answer to the questions propounded within, I can only reply to the 3d, as follows: According to the best of my knowledge and belief, Mr. J. C. Pelton was the first person who established and aught a school in this city. Certain it is, his name was the first I ever heard mentioned in connection with public schools in this city or State since August 1st, 1849.

I am, gentlemen, your fellow-citizen,
DANIEL GIRAUD.

San Francisco, July 5th, 1864.

Committee on Public Schools:

Gentlemen:—In answer to your questions in regard to Common Schools—I am not able to state the date or the month of the first free school in this city, although I sent my son to the first one; this was early in 1850. By what authority it was established, I am not able to say. The gentleman who taught it was Mr. Pelton, assisted by his lady. In regard to salary he received, I know nothing more than what he said to me in a conversation that I had with him at that time. His remarks were, that he had made no arrangements in regard to his salary; but expected that the city would do something in regard to it.

Mr. Pelton and his lady were the first persons that opened a Free School in San Francisco.

I am, gentlemen, very respectfully yours,
W. H. BROWN.

In my opinion the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System of San Francisco belongs to J. C. Pelton.

The first Public School was opened in December, 1849; by authority of Town Council; under the superintendence of J. C. Pelton; at a salary of $500.

CHARLES BROWN,
Resident since 1849.

[From a letter from H. Kimball, a citizen of San Francisco since 1848, to J. C. Pelton, 1857.]

I well remember when the first free Public School was organized in the fall or early in the winter of 1849. I also distincly remember that you were its first teacher, and chiefly instrumental in its establishment, and that you were employed by the City Council as a Public Teacher.

H. KIMBALL.

In my opinion the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System of San Francisco belongs to John C. Pelton.

The first Public School was opened in December, 1849; by authority of Town Council; under the superintendence of J. C. Pelton.

WM. B. COOKE,
Resided since July 6, 1849, in San Francisco.

In my opinion the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System of San Francisco belongs to John C. Pelton.

The first Public School was opened in December, 1849; by authority of Town Council: under the superintendence of J. C. Pelton.

P. M. SCOOFFY.
Residence since 1849.

[Extract from a letter from Thomas Sprague, a citizen "Yerba Buena" since October, 1848, to J. C. Pelton, 1857.]

Sir,—If you refer to the first *free* school established here since the discovery of gold, I have to answer, that 'thou art the man.'

THOMAS SPRAGUE.

[Letter from James Cushing to J. C. Pelton, in 1857.]

In December '49, you notified me that you were about to open (in the old wooden Baptist Church in Washington Street) a *Public Free School*, and I at once decided on sending my son, Charles D., then about ten years of age. I know that he was one of your scholars on the day of opening, some time in the month of December, 1849. He now claims, and has always claimed, the honor of being the *first public free school scholar in the State of California.*

JAMES CUSHING.

SAN FRANCISCO, 20th August, 1854.

MESSRS. WM. G. BADGER, J. F. POPE and D. LUNT:

Gentlemen,—I do not remember when the first Free Public School in San Francisco was established, nor by what authority; but in 1850 Mr. J. C. Pelton was the teacher, but at what salary, or by whom paid, I do not know. Respectfully,

R. H. WALLER.

MESSRS. WM. G. BADGER, J. F. POPE and D. LUNT:

Gentlemen,—On my arrival in San Francisco, early in the spring of 1850, I was introduced by Rev. O. C. Wheeler to Mr. Pelton, then keeping the Public School in the Baptist church on Washington street.

ABM. HOBSON, No. 7 Prospect Place.

We, the undersigned, believe that the credit of having inaugurated the Free School system in this city belongs to Mr. J. C. Pelton. The first Free School was opened in December, 1849, and taught by Mr. J. C. Pelton.

A. A. LOUDERBACK, here in 1849.

I attended the school in 1849.

DAVIS LOUDERBACK. [Attorney Police Court.]

In my opinion the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System of San Francisco belongs to John C. Pelton.

The First Public school was opened early in 1850; under the superintendence of Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Pelton. Myself, brothers and sisters attended Mr. Pelton's school in 1850.

WILL. P. YOUNGER, M. D.

San Francisco, 30th July, 1864.

Messrs. W. G. Badger, J. F. Pope, and D. Lunt:

Gentlemen,—I arrived in San Francisco, early in November, 1849, and my impression is that not more than two months elapsed before the first Free Public School was established here, and my impression is that Mr. J. C. Pelton was mainly instrumental in establishing the Free Public Schools of this State. Who the first teacher was, or what salary he received, I do not now remember, neither do I now recollect by what authority the School was established. My first acquaintance with Mr. Pelton was in connection with a Public School.

Respectfully, etc.,
J. D. BRISTOL.

San Francisco, June 25th, 1864.

Messrs. Wm. G. Badger, J. F. Pope, and D. Lunt:

Gentlemen,—I am satisfied that Mr. J. C. Pelton should have the credit of being the founder of the "Free School System in this city." He arrived here in the Fall of 1849, in the ship New Jersey, from Boston, and brought books and left them in my store, saying he intended commencing a Public School here. In December, 1849, he did commence a Free School in the Baptist Church on Washington street. In the Spring of 1850 the City Council acknowledged it, and voted scrip for its support. At the time no other school was named or thought of as "Public School," for the city to support. I remember perfectly well the discussions in the Council and the appropriations voted to Mr. Pelton and his wife as *the teachers of the Public School.*

Very respectfullly yours,
A. D. HATCH.

San Francisco, August 10th, 1864.

To the Committee on Common Schools:

Gentlemen,—I am not sufficiently conversant with the history of the Common Schools of this city to answer fully the foregoing interrogatories. I can, however, cheerfully bear witness to the following facts, which came under my notice:

During the years 1851 and 1852, I resided on Stockton street, and became acquainted with J. C. Pelton through his solicitations for aid and encouragement in establishing a school in that vicinity, with the view, as he said, of initiating a system of Public Schools in San Francisco. In justice to Mr. Pelton, I must say, that notwithstanding the discouragements before him, his exertions were constant and untiring, and he was spoken of in the neighborhood as one of the most active and efficient pioneer school teachers in the city.

Respectfully,
SHEROLD D. STONE.

[Addressed to J. C. Pelton in 1857.]

I was an early resident of this city, having arrived here on the 17th of September, 1849. Soon after, I placed my son Alphonso under your instruction, and continued to send him to your school till its close in the autumn of 1851. At first, I expected to pay for his tuition, and accordingly sent money. It was, however, *returned* to me, with the assurance that tuition would not be received. I then offered the money as a contribution to relieve you from the embarrassment which it was understood you occasionally suffered in consequence of the city failing to pay your salary and other expenses of the school. This, after being repeatedly offered to you, was finally for several months accepted by your lady. I regarded your school as a great blessing to San Francisco in those days. It was surprising to me that you could keep a free school so long. You had and have still my thanks for the good instruction given my son Alphonso. He has continued to attend Mr. Carlton's, and now the Powell Street School, and has made progress.

J. LECLERC.

☞ For preceding and following pages, completing this pamphlet, see PARTS I, II, III, IV and VI, to be had at all the bookstores. J. C. P.

ORIGIN OF FREE COMMON SCHOOLS

IN THIS

CITY AND STATE.

THE QUESTION DISCUSSED.

I have never before called public attention to the following and like discussions which have, in years past, occasionally appeared in the press of San Francisco. It is with regret that I feel compelled to do so now. But the frequent and persistent misstatements and misrepresentation of facts connected with the history of the Public Schools of this city, and my early connection with the same will, I am sure, be considered by all a sufficient apology. During the past twelve or thirteen years, with almost unbroken silence, I have submitted to a series of constant personal annoyances, from *various* quarters, growing out of the fact of my being *thought* in the way of *somebody's* ambitious aspirations. A silent indifference on my part shall no longer favor or encourage such selfish and unjust schemings.

Soon after the publication of the first annual Report of the Superintendent in ☞ 1852, ☜ the following appeared in the San Francisco *Whig*. Its editors were then F. M. Pixley and L. R. Lull. (I was not then acquainted with either of those gentlemen.) Other comments of a similar character followed in other papers of the city.

J. C. P.

[From the San Francisco Whig, ☞1852.☜]

Mr. J. C. Pelton and the Free Schools of San Francisco.

To no person in this city so much indebted for its free school system as to the gentleman whose name heads this article. We well remember his arduous efforts in 1849 in the cause of education, and the untiring energy he displayed in establishing the first public school in California, and, indeed, on the Pacific coast. Without the aid of the then Ayuntamiento or the citizens, surrounded by a community whose only aim was to amass wealth for the pocket instead of the mind, did this gentleman plant the seed from which has grown our present system of schools—a system destined in a few years to equal that of any State in the confederacy. Mr. Pelton expended his time and his money from November, 1849, to April 1850, without hope or expectation of reward. In the latter month his school was established as a city school by the action of the Ayuntameinto, and the small sum of $500 per month for himself and wife was voted as his salary, and this was paid in scrip, which depreciated to such an extent that he was obliged to dispose of most of it at 30 [60] per cent. discount. From this time to August, 1851, a period of nearly two years, this gentleman and his accomplished lady labored assiduously for the education of our youth, having at one time under their immediate tuition, nearly three hundred scholars, and in the whole period, more than eleven hundred. The pay received for these services was a miserable pittance, always in scrip, which freqnently became almost worthless. We enter minutely into details, because we desire that this whole community should know how much they are indebted to Mr. Pelton and his wife, and also for the purpose of introducing another person to the notice of the public.

After the heat and burthen of the day had been undergone by these pioneers in the establishment of schools in this city, Mr. J. T. Nevins, the agent of the American Tract Society, their colporteur, bookseller and minister, was appointed superintendent of San Francisco schools. This gentleman, for aught we know, has performed the duties of his office satisfactorily enough, but with a certain degree of arrogance and self-glorification which the following quotation from his late annual report well exemplifies:

"At the close of the first year of the Free Common School enterprise in this city, the Superintendent takes the liberty to express his grateful appreciation of the kindness, confidence and urbanity with which he has been treated by the members of the Board of Education from first to last, and of the readiness of the Board to adopt any measures within the means at their disposal for the promotion of the best interests of the public schools."

Now, the first part of this sentence is exceedingly modest. Mr. Nevins seems to have forgotten that he is only an eleventh hour man, and that the principal praise is due to another who established common schools more than a year before him. He seems to have forgotten Mr. Pelton altogether. This is in rather bad taste for the Superintendent, because most of the readers of his report know by whose exertions our first schools were organized. We have not the pleasure of Mr. Nevins' acquaintance, and can be actuated by no ill will toward him. Our only object in making the above remarks is to bestow praise where it is due. *

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* For the above disinterested and plain statement of facts, I believe I am chiefly indebted to Mr. L. B Lull. Mr. Pixley's statement will be found on page 30. J. C. P.

Testimony of Early Citizens Continued.

San Francisco, August 15, 1864.

Messrs. Wm. Badger, J. F. Pope, and D. Lunt:

Gentlemen,—Your communication in relation to the origin of the Common Schools of this city has been received, and in answer I would say, that from all the information I have ever obtained on the subject, I have never doubted but that to Mr. John C. Pelton "belongs the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System in this city." And here I would say that this information was obtained not only from the late worthy Superintendent of Common Schools, J. T. Nevins, Esq., deceased, (whom I knew intimately,) but from others.

In answer to your second interrogatory, ["by what authority was it established,"] I would say first, by John C. Pelton, and afterwards by the authority of the Common Council of this city.

In answer to the third interrogatory, ["by whom taught,"] I answer, by Mr. John C. Pelton and his wife, Mrs. Pelton. And in answer to your fourth interrogatory, ["at what salary,"] would say, my impressions are that they at first received no salary, but afterwards five hundred dollars per month in city scrip.

Hoping that this brief communication may have the effect of aiding in placing this question of the origin of Common Schools right before this community, I remain,

Yours truly,

W. O. ANDREWS, Notary.
A resident of San Francisco since early in 1850.

San Francisco Nov. 30th, 1854.

J. C. Pelton, Esq.:

Dear Sir,—Yours is at hand, and in answer let me say, that I am confident of getting my first impression of your being the founder [inaugurator] of the Public Schools of this city from Mr. Nevins; and I think, on reflection, that he (Mr. Nevins) first introduced us; and that he, at that time said to me, that you was "the founder of the first Public School in San Francisco."*

Yours truely,
W. O. ANDREWS.

P. S.—We first met, I am very confident, at Mr. Nevins' old office, on Washington Street, near where the Baptist Church now stands, as early as the early part of the year 1850.

W. O. A.

SAN FRANCISCO, April 10th, 1851.

DR. A. RANDALL: [Assembly.]

Dear Sir,—The bearer, Mr. J. C. Pelton, is the principal of the school first established in this city, and has sustained it from the beginning at great sacrifice and with distinguished ability. He is anxious to get the best possible school system adopted, and now visits the Capital in connection with that object; and any facility you may be able to afford him in bringing his views and suggestions to the notice of the members of the Legislature will, I have no doubt, tend to the promotion of the best interests of popular education.

He proposes some amendments to Mr. Heydenfelt's bill, which he will explain to you.

* * * * * * * *

Yours, in haste.
T. J. NEVINS.

[From a letter of J. Winchester, Editor Pacific News in 1849 and '50.]

I am satisfied Mr. Pelton's efforts to establish an educational system in which *all* the children could be freely taught, *preceded* the arrival of Col. Nevins by many months, if not a year—a long time in the California of 1849–50. I took a lively interest and earnestly advocated in the *Pacific News* Mr. Pelton's efforts in this respect, long before I saw or knew Col. Nevins. Certainly, I consider Mr. Pelton the *pioneer* in planting the germ of our present free school system in California; and while I award to Col. Nevins great zeal in the same field after his arrival (I think in the latter part of 1850,) J. C. Pelton ought not to be deprived, by any posthumous record, of the credit which is justly due for his earlier efforts in planting and watering the tree of knowledge here in a glorious golden land.

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* Mr Andrews is perfectly correct in his impressions. See Mr. Nevins' letter following
J. C. P.

Your obt. servant,
J. WINCHESTER.

SAN FRANCISCO, December 27th, 1864.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON COMMON SCHOOLS:

Gentlemen,—In answer to your question as to the origin of Common Schools in this city, I have to say, that I arrived here on the 13th of November, 1849, by ship, *via* Cape Horn. Sometime during the winter of 1850, Mr. Pelton commenced keeping a Public School. As early as February, of that year, I commenced sending my son, Joseph, to school to Mr. Pelton, carrying him from the ship, in a boat, every day, and returning at night. Sometime after he commenced his School, the then Ayuntamiento (and during the winter of 1850) passed an order appropriating $500 per month for the support of Free Public Schools. In 1851-2, I was a member of the Board of Assistant Aldermen, and during that time Mr. Nevins' name came before us as a candidate for Superintendent of Common Schools, and that was the first time I ever heard of Mr. Nevins, in connection with the Schools, and more than a year* after Mr. Pelton commenced his School. With a little time, I think there might be considerable light† shed on the subject, for I presume the whole proceedings can be found in the records of the Ayuntamiento and Common Council of those years.

Yours, respectfully,
JOSEPH GALLOWAY,
[Assistant Alderman, 1851-2.]

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* About two years—less a few days. J. C. P.

†For this "light," see page 91. J. C. P.

San Francisco, Sept. 9th, 1864.

To whom it may concern,—I arrived here June 20th, 1850, from New York. At that time Mr. John C. Pelton was teacher of a public school in Washington Street Baptist Church. And at that time Mr. Thos J. Nevins had an office on same street, and was the acting agent of the American Tract Society, and had Sunday School Books for sale.

Respectfully yours,
H. CHANNING BEALS.

San Francisco, January 19, 1865.

To Messrs. Badger, Pope and Ayer:

Gentlemen,—I received a communication from you, desiring information in regard to the origin of Common Schools in this city, as the question to whom the honor belongs, has arisen in this community.

Whatever credit there may be, is due to J. C. Pelton. I commenced going to a school taught by him, in the month of December, 1849. It was started and continued, during the period I attended (some twelve months) as a Free Public School. Although there were a few contributions made to Mr. Pelton, by a limited number of the scholars' parents, yet this was a free-will offering, as it was never required of any scholar to contribute one cent for tuition.

As Mr. Nevins' name has been mentioned in this connection, I will state that he had nothing to do with school matters at that time, but was agent for the American Tract Society, and had his office, in which he kept the books of the Society, in a small house adjoining the School yard. He visited the school frequently, but in no official capacity

It would, under any circumstances, be a pleasure to assist in rendering "unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," but it affords me double gratification to bear testimony in behalf of an old preceptor, who exhibited so much faithfulness and devotion to the youth of California in those early days of her history, and for whom I shall ever retain the highest respect.

Your obedient servant,

N. B. LANE.

To Messrs. Badger, Pope and Lunt:

Gentlemen,—Your interrogatories are at hand, and in answer let me say, that, to No. 1—The first school to my knowledge, *after* Sept. 9th, 1849, [the date of Mr. Buckley's arrival in San Francisco,] was the school located on Washington street, in the old Baptist church building. The Principals were Mr. J. C. Pelton and wife. I painted a sign for them at the time; I believe it was worded the "First Public School." That was in the latter part of 1849, or the beginning of 1850. I recollect well an incident that occurred at that early date, of my approving his publicly castigating a rude boy in the street (for annoying the school,) and of protecting Mr. Pelton from some irate citizens who did not understand his object in whipping the boy—policemen were scarce in those days.

2d. The school was established by the Ayuntamiento or Supervisors of that date, to the best of my recollection.

3d and 4th. Answered, as far as I know.

I would state, the building on the Plaza for a school erected, was in use at this time as Court of Judge of 1st Instance; and having noticed a discussion in regard to this question in the papers, I deem it proper to state that it was some time after this early date that I had heard of Mr. Nevins' connection with our School Department. Having been one of the Board of Education in 1854—1855, I remarked no particular reasons or extraordinary efforts on the part of Col. Nevins to entitle him to honors his friends assume for his memory—to be placed on his monument as a falsehood, and handed down to posterity.

Our true pioneers who aided in the establishment of our Free Schools, don't ask empty honors for doing a bounden duty; and it is more becoming to make no invidious distinctions in a matter that pertains to the genius of the American people for a quarter of a century past.

Respectfully yours,
J. P. BUCKLEY.

In my opinion, the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System of San Francisco belongs to John C. Pelton. The first Public School was opened in December, 1849; by authority of City Council; under the superintendence of J. C. Pelton and wife; at a salary of $500 in city scrip.

JAMES GALLAGHER,
Arrived July 5, 1849, in the ship Andalusia, from Baltimore, Md.

San Francisco, July 17, 1864.

I have resided in California since June, 1849, mostly in Sacramento. My impression has always been, that to Mr. John C. Pelton belonged the credit of establishing the first Free School in San Francisco.

Respectfully,
E. COVINGTON.

San Francisco, August 10th, 1864.

J. C. Pelton, Esq:

Dear Sir,—Your favor is at hand, and in reply I can only say, that in those early days my attention as to dates to give you the positive information you desire, is out of the question, for I then thought but little about Schools, Schoolhouses or Schoolmasters. I recollect your name being mentioned as teacher, very early in my California recollection, and the first schoolmaster I heard talked about, and in 1853 (I think) I made the acquaintance of Mr. Denman, who taught in a shanty on Minna street, afterward in the above Denman School.

Respectfully, yours,
J. O. ELDRIDGE.

THE DISCUSSION—Continued.

Letter of Rev. S. H. Willey.

[Never before the Committee on Common Schools.]

It is not necessary to insert this document here; for being of the same character and repeating the same misstatements contained in Mr. Williams' letter, it will hereafter (see page 95) be found fully answered by Mr. Soule and by the following:

Testimony of Public Records.

Memorandum of Action of City Government and Early Papers on file in the Public Archives.

1849.

First Paper, September 6th.—A petition of Rev. A. Williams "*Rector of Public School*," addressed to the "Honorable Ayuntamiento of the municipality of San Francisco," asking for the use "*of the building known as the Public Institute* (?) for the purpose of holding a Public School," and also asking the Council "to authorize the payment of five dollars per month for each and every pupil regularly attending the said school, allowing the undersigned the liberty to make an additional charge to each scholar, according to the grade of studies pursued," &c., &c. No action appears in reference to this "proposition."

[On my arrival in October, I heard nothing of the above. J. C. P.]

1850.

Second. January 11th. (Action in Council,)—On motion of Col. Stewart, it was "Resolved that a Committee of five members of this Council be added to the standing committee, which shall be called the Committee on Education, to whom shall be referred all matters relating to Common Schools and Public Education."

[I had consulted with Col. Stewart. He conceived this the first proper step, as it proved to be.]

Third. February 11. In Common Council, a report from Committee on Education, H. C. Murray, Chairman—"was read and accepted" recommending the establishment of a Public School.

[This action was preceded by a recommendation of various prominent citizens. O. C. Wheeler, W. D. M. Howard and others.]

Fourth. Feb. 20th. In Council.—A communication from J. C. Pelton, stating his designs in regard to establishing free Public Schools, was submitted by Committee on Education with recommendation in favor of action on the part of city authorities for the establishment of a Public School.

FIFTH. March 4th. In Council.—A petition from O. C. Wheeler, and others, asking for the adoption of the School in Baptist Church, received and referred to Committee on Education.

SIXTH. March 11th. In Council.—Committee on Education, by H. C. Murray, Chairman, reported an "ordinance" providing that "one square of land be and the same is hereby granted and appropriated," &c., &c., "for the support of a free academy, to be called the San Francisco Free Academy. (From the preamble—"the general diffusion of knowledge—the palladium of civil liberty, and the surest pledge of lasting prosperity to a people;" &c.)

SEVENTH. 20. (?) In Council.—An elaborate paper from H. C. Murray of the Committee on Education was read, urging in strong terms that immediate action be taken in the "cause of *popular education*." Not one dollar he said, had the city yet bestowed upon *this* the city's most important interest, while hundreds of thousands had flowed freely from the public treasury for almost every other conceivable object.

This communication again recommended the appropriation of lots, and block of land, to be kept leased or sold exclusively for the benefit of "popular education." It referred to the merits of the school kept by J. C. Pelton, in the Baptist chapel, commended the enterprise, and asked of the Council its consideration of this school, and the whole subject matter of Public Schools.

EIGHTH. March 28. In Council.—The following *resolution* [by Talbot H. Greene] was unanimously adopted:

> "RESOLVED, That from the first day of April, A. D. 1850, John C. Pelton and Mrs. Pelton his wife, be employed as teachers for the Public School in the Baptist Church, which has been offered to the Council free of charge, and that the average number of scholars shall not exceed one hundred; and that they shall be entitled to a monthly salary, during the pleasure of the Council, of five hundred dollars per month, payable each and every month."

NINTH. March 28th. In Council.—"On motion of Mr. Graham, the Committee on Education, were instructed to prepare an ordinance for the regulation of said [the above] school."

TENTH. April 8th. In Council.—The Committee on Education reported an "ordinance for the regulation of Common Schools," as follows:

1st. Be it ordained by the Common Council of San Francisco, That from and after the passage of this Act it shall be the duty of J. C. Pelton, who has been employed by the Council as a public teacher, to open a school in the Baptist Chapel.

2d. Said school shall be opened from half-past 8 A. M. to 12 M., and from 2 P. M. until 5 P. M., and shall continue open from Monday until Friday at 5 o'clock, P. M.

3d. The number of scholars shall not exceed the number of one hundred; and no scholar shall be admitted under the age of four, or over the age of sixteen.

4th. All persons desirous of having their children instructed in said school shall first obtain an order from the Chairman of the Committee on Education, and all children obtaining said order shall be instructed in said school free of charge.

5th. It shall be the duty of said Pelton to report to the Council on the first of each and every month the number of scholars and the progress of said school.

H. C. MURRAY.
F. TILFORD.

ELEVENTH. May 4th. In Council.—The report of J. C. Pelton, [the first Public School Report on record in this city,] was read and placed on file.

Mr. Willey's appeals to the Records, in view of the fact that they most conclusively prove *the very opposite* of his assertions, is certainly remarkable. It must be that Mr. Williams has never searched those archives or Records to which he refers with such confidence, and which are so fatal to his cause.

I leave *those whom it may concern* or interest, to draw their own inferences from the above *appeals to public Records*, when taken in connection with the FOLLOWING: J. C. P.

1849.

[Extract from the Pacific News, December 27.]

A FREE PUBLIC SCHOOL.

It will be seen by the advertisement which we give below, that a movement in favor of education is about commencing in our midst. Mr. J. C. Pelton proposes to open a School in the Baptist Chapel on Washington street, which shall for the present, at least, be free for children of both sexes.

We know nothing further of the gentleman than that he comes among us recommended by Governor Briggs and other friends of education in Massachusetts, for his high moral character, and for that skill in the regulation of a school and in the imparting of instruction, without which no teacher can succeed. We can but express our sincere hope that his laudable efforts may be crowned with success.

The following is his notice, addressed

To the Citizens of San Francisco:

The subscriber proposes to establish in San Francisco, a Free Public School.

In order that the school may be free to all who may be disposed to avail themselves of its privileges, it is proposed to admit free of tuition all who may apply; no other compensation being required at present, than what the friends of the school and the public generally may be disposed to contribute.

It is also proposed, until better arrangements can be made, that the school consist of children and youth of both sexes and of the different ages that usually attend primary and more advanced schools, and that the course of study include those English branches taught in the Public Schools of New England.

The Baptist Chapel, situated on Washington street, has been generously tendered, and a sufficient sum guaranteed to conveniently fit the same for the uses of the proposed school.

The school will commence on Wednesday, the 26th inst.

Before leaving the States, the subscriber procured, at an expense of much time and pains, an ample supply of the most approved school books, with which those pupils who wish can be supplied at the school room.

The subscriber is permitted to refer to Mr. F. P. Fitts, Mr. Wm. W. Gallaer, Mr. Wm. Hooper, and the Rev. Mr. Wheeler.

The names of the Trustees will appear in a subsequent number of this paper.

J. C. PELTON.

Dedication of the Bush Street (Now "Denman") School, 1854.

[Shortly after the dedicatory services of the new school on Bush street, in 1854—on which occasion the speakers, particularly Rev. Mr. S. H. Willey, made *that* school the *first* or *pioneer* from which all the other Public Schools of the city had had their origin—the following comments and communications, and a great many others, appeared in the press of the city. It is worthy of note that none of the above or the following notices and criticisms have ever been answered or responded to in any manner till recently.—J. C. P.]

[From the Pioneer Monthly Magazine, September, [illegible] 1854, [illegible] page 189.]

"FAIR PLAY."

EDITOR'S TABLE.—Fair play is a jewel. Honor to whom honor is due. It is rather late for us to speak, but in justice to a worthy, self-sacrificing man, we feel bound to do so. And we can speak by the card, for we were knowing to all the facts of the case. We were surprised some time since upon reading an account of the dedicatory ceremonies that came off at the opening of the Bush street school-house, to find that the different speakers, in alluding to the origin of the Free Schools of San Francisco, made not the slightest allusion to Mr. J. C. Pelton, who was, to our certain knowledge, the first gentleman that ever started a Free School in San Francisco.

His early struggles, his arduous labors for ten long months, the noble and christian spirit he manifested, his perseverance in the midst of poverty of the most stinging kind, the self-sacrificing disposition, and the determination he evinced to ndhere to the great purpose of laying the foundation of a Common School System on the shores of the Pacific, notwithstanding the tempting sources of wealth that were springing up all around him in 1849, were utterly ingored by the speakers. Why this injustice? It cannot but be that the Rev. Mr. Willey and Mr. John H. Wills were not acquainted with the facts.

In sooth, we have strong reason to suspect that the fault lay not with them, but that the injustice is to be charged *at other doors*. In December, 1849, Mr. Pelton came to us and stated his plans. We thought him slightly insane. But as he thought that a kind word in the *Pacific News*, which journul we were editing at the time, would materially assist him in his enterprise, we cheerfully extended to him such aid as lay in our power. But we will let another tell the story, who, in the columns of the *Herald* writes as follows: [See this article, p. 99.]

Mr. Pelton is a pioneer, and should not be forgotten.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Letter of Rev. Albert Williams, and an Answer thereto by Hon. Frank Soule.

FRANK SOULE, ESQ.: *Dear Sir*,—I take the liberty of enclosing for your examination *three* communications, written by the Rev. Albert Williams, (two of which were penned for and published in the *Evening Bulletin* the other addressed to the "Committee on Origin of Common Schools,") in defense of the Nevins Epitaph, and his connection therewith. I have thought proper to place them before you, and to solicit your reply to them; and particularly, to the chief points in Mr. Williams' letter to said Committee, because, as you will observe, he refers to you somewhat pointedly, and cites the public, to the "Annals of San Francisco," of which you were one of the Editors, in the support of his position and the Epitaph. An answer at your earliest convenience will oblige,

Your ob't serv't,

J. C. PELTON.

SAN FRANCISCO, July 3d, 1865.

[Letter from Rev. A. Williams, (author of the inscription on the Monument of T. J. Nevins,) addressed to the Committee on Common Schools.]

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 6th, 1864.

WM. G. BADGER, ESQ:

Dear Sir,—You ask from me a statement of my views upon the question now before the Board of Education, "To whom belongs the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System in this City?"

I answer, *in my opinion, the Free School System in this City was inaugurated by the late Col. T. J. Nevins.*

In this opinion, I am supported:

1. By the universal and unquestioned admission of this claim, until a late date, when a counter-claim has been raised against it.

2. Because, in the part I shared in preparing the inscription to be placed on the Nevins Monument, I wrote most freely and promptly what, in common with others, I had ever held to be the truth in the case.

3. I have a distinct recollection of the history of the introduction of the Free School System in this city, and remember that I considered Col. Nevins as the original and prominent agent in the matter as quite premature, and in advance of the times in the movement.

4. Private schools had been previously in existence. Prior to and during 1849, such schools were here taught. But of these, and any others of a later date, before the introduction of the Public School System, I know none which was the foundation of that system, or out of which it can in truth be said that system arose. I regard the Public School System of this city, as an orginal movement commenced and carried through by the help, of course, of the city authorities, by the agency of Col. Nevins.

5. Besides the testimony of living witnesses in favor of this claim in behalf of Col. Nevins, which is abundant, there is documentary proof at command to confirm the truth of this testimony. In this connection, I beg to refer the Committee to the following authorities: California Legislative Reports 1849-50, p. 1239; Ninth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools in San Francisco, by H. B. Janes, Esq., for the year 1859; A Tribute to the Memory of Col. Nevins, offered and passed in the Board of Education of San Francisco, and published in the *Pacific* newspaper, 19th June, 1862; Records of the Common Council for the period including the date of the inauguration of the system of Public Schools of San Francisco and lastly, The Annals of San Francisco, article Public Schools.

Very respectfully, yours,

A. WILLIAMS.

Mr. Soule's Reply to Above.

My attention having been called to the above array of *reasons*, I shall thus reply to them:

1. There was no such "universal and unquestioned admission of this claim" of Mr. Nevins, as intimated by Mr. Williams. He should have known it. The testimony of the city Press during the past thirteen years, and the positive and almost unanimous statements of the many respectable citizens given in

connection with this, proves conclusively, the utter futility of any such assertion. The only "counter claim" was that raised by the indiscreet and over-zealous friends of Mr. Nevins—friends who determined, as it would certainly seem, to misrepresent facts, violate history, and supplant the Higher Power, in *predestinating* Mr. Nevins for the honor so indubitably belonging to another.

2. Mr. Williams' second reason is simply this: That because he "freely and promptly" helped prepare the inscription for the Nevins Monument; therefore, it must be true. It takes something more than truth-defying verbiage to metamorphose fable into history.

3. A sufficient answer to the third reason of Mr. Williams, (merely an appeal to his memory, which see,) will be found in the testimony borne by the many hundreds, if not thousands, of intelligent and truthful men in this city, who utterly ignore any and every claim of Mr. Nevins; they having a perfect knowledge and understanding of the whole matter, and no feeling or interest in the question, that of truth and justice.

4. In his fourth reason, Mr. Williams says, that he considers the Public School system of this city as "an original movement, commenced and carried through by Col. Nevins." If any one will take the trouble to search the early archives of the Supervisors, he will find there Mr. Williams' appeal to the City Council to appropriate five dollars per month, as tuition, for each of Mr. Williams' pupils; to allow him also to charge another per month to the parents or guardians of said pupils; and in his memorial he styles himself "*Rector* (?) *of Public Schools.*" If *he* were Rector of Public Schools as early as August, 1849, how could *Mr. Nevins* be their originator in 1851–2? The two claims, equally without foundation, thus brought *face* to *face*, give a very lucid idea of Mr.

Williams' reasoning, his recollection of facts, his adherence to history, and his muddy sense of justice.

5. "Fifthly and lastly," Mr. Williams appeals to documents, viz: California Legislative Reports, 1849–50; Mr. Janes' Report for 1859; a Tribute to the Memory of Mr. Nevins; Records of the Council; and the *Annals of San Francisco.* Now, as those California Reports simply say, that no action was had or was necessary on the question of schools at that very early day—about two years before Mr. Nevins' connection with the schools; and as Mr. Janes' Report was simply, so far as Mr. Nevins' claims were considered, a recognition of what Mr. Nevins had done long after our Free Schools had been inaugurated; and as that "Tribute" was but the work of Mr. Nevins' injudicious and short-sighted friends, (or other persons, for sinister purposes,) who were determined, regardless of facts and history, justice and truth, to force the honor upon him at all hazards; and as the "Records of the Common Council" show conclusively the existence of a Free, Public, Common School in the city, before Mr. Nevins had set foot in California; and as the statements made in the "Annals" *were prepared by Mr. Nevins himself,* and re-written by the chief compiler of the "Annals," who knew nothing himself of the facts—it is difficult to see in what respect Mr. Williams' appeal to documents has strengthened the claim of Mr. Nevins.

Finally, I have to say, that in all my experience of men and their acts, I have never known so bare-faced, impudent, unprincipled and reprehensible an attempt to violate the truth of history and ignore justice, as this effort to rob one man of the honors justly his due, to bestow them upon another totally without claim to them: the whole conspiracy having its inception in, and being supported by, nothing save a narrow and bigoted prejudice—a blind and wicked fanaticism that can discover nothing commendable in this world which emanates from anybody, or anything, that will not, meekly assimilate with itself, or humbly bow to its own unjust and arbitrary sway.

FRANK SOULE.

San Francisco, June 6, 1865.

Erratum.—In last line of 3d paragraph, p. 97, before the word "that," the reader will supply the omitted word "except."]

THE "TRIBUTE"—CORRECTED.

Note.—In the "*Tribute*" above referred to occurs several *grave* errors, which will be found here corrected. These misstatements have been repeated over and over, again and again, and have not only been placed upon the Records of the Public School Department, but have at last been epitomized upon marble:

First.—The Spring Valley School Property was obtained by the School Department by *purchase* of a ninety-nine years' *lease* from the "Spring Valley Religious Society." For this lease, the Board of Education *paid* six hundred and seventy-eight dollars *in advance*. Mr. Nevins, therefore, did not "*donate*" that property to the School Department. Those engaged in preparing the "*Tribute*," could easily have learned these facts from the Records of the School Department; and with very little effort, they could also have avoided the following errors.

Second.—The second error of the "*Tribute*" will be found corrected in the Extracts from Public Records, page 91, of this pamphlet. H. C. Murray seems to have been *first* of all in "urging" the City Council to action in favor of Common Schools. I may be pardoned for saying that I had personally waited on Judge Murray, and with others, had repeatedly solicited his attention to this subject.

Third.—The third error of the "*Tribute*" will also be found corrected by the "Public Records." H. C. Murray *first* suggested, in City Council, the appropriation of lots and "blocks, or squares of land" for the benefit of "popular education." [See p. 91, of this pamphlet.]

Fourth.—The fourth error—a serious one—will be found satisfactorily corrected in a pamphlet recently issued by the Buffalo Historical Society, entitled a "History of the Buffalo Public Schools"—which see.

Fifth error—A paper published by Samuel Brannan, Esq.*—The California Star, E. C. Kemble, editor—appears to have been the "*first* agency" in calling public attention to the necessity of establishing Public Schools; the Alta, Pacific News, Journal of Commerce, Herald, California Courier, Public Balance, and others, following in the good work.

J. C. P.

[*Mr. Brannan was also one of the first subscribers for the assistance of my school before it was adopted by the City Council.]

[For article referred to in brackets on page 95, as to be found on "page 99," see page 100—"Sketch of the Origin of the First Free School," &c.]

COMMITTEE ON COMMON SCHOOLS:

Gentlemen,—The credit belongs—first, To civilization; second, to progress; third, to the intelligence of the American people. When a work illimitable and universal in its character and designs, descends from God, that work belongs to God. Had we arrived here, as the Goths descended on western Europe, without antecedent instruction, and had some great Mind, appreciating the worth of knowledge, given to us schools, where the manners or *mœurs* of the people were nomadic and barbarous; then, to one Genius, to one grand Instructor, might have been given the glory and immortality of having brought our children out of darkness into light; out of the descending scale of knowledge into that grand *aureole* where intelligence brings us nearer our All-Wise Creator. I consider it very secondary to answer *who* is entitled to the credit of founding our Public Schools here; and I speak of individuals. I say, the cause of their foundation is the fact, that American intelligence and progress were here in our infancy; and that the infants of that infancy were guaranteed, by a law as holy as those of the tablets, a free and liberal education.

Mr. Pelton, I have no doubt, was the willing instrument to urge us to our duty; but, had Mr. Pelton never lived, the principle of our school system would yet exist here as elsewhere. If you would give Mr. Pelton credit, give it, that he had self-abnegation and unselfish industry, at a time when all seemed selfish; but to give him credit as *the founder** of Public Schools in San Francisco, is to ignore the educational progress of three generations—to ignore America's '76, and France's (and the world's) '93.

Yours, respectfully,
JAMES J. AYERS.
[Editor of the Morning Call.]

[From the San Francisco Herald, July 10, ☞ 1854. ☜]

Sketch of the Origin of the First San Francisco Free School.

EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—The reading of the report of the exercises of the late dedication of the Happy Valley School-house† [see p. 94,] has revived the recollection of some interesting reminiscences of the memorable year of 1849. In the Spring of that year the writer of this embarked at Boston in the ship New Jersey, with a large company for California. Like the mass of emigrants we were gold hunting adventurers seeking our fortunes in the new El Dorado. But there were two persons accompanying us who started with a nobler object in view. These were Mr. John C. Pelton and his worthy lady. Their object was the establishment of the Free School System in the remote region of California. Their intentions were nobly seconded by the friends of education in Boston, and they brought with them credentials of a high character.

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* This credit is claimed ☞ ONLY ☜ on behalf of Mr. Nevins—NEVER by Mr. Pelton. See Note, page 22.

†Situated on the corner of Stockton, and Bush streets; afterwards, in May, 1856, named the "Denman Grammar School."

At Callao, at which place the ship touched, they refused a very flattering offer to open an English school in that place. We arrived in the middle of the Autumn of '49, in the midst of the din of the thousand hammers then employed in the building of the new city of the Pacific. All were then eager to improve the golden moment to secure a sudden fortune and return to their friends in the East. It was at this time—when a "pile" seemed a sure reward of industry and enterprise—that Mr. Pelton chose to forego these tempting prospects, for the accomplishment of his cherished object.

After securing a shelter for his family in that memorable inclement season, he immediately commenced his preparations for opening a school His plan was favorably received by many of the prominent citizens of San Francisco, and he was encouraged to make a beginning. The trustees of the First Baptist Church in Washington street offered the gratuitous use of their chapel for a school-room, which was accepted and occupied for this purpose until the June fire of 1851. This was, at that time, when buildings were in great demand and rents enormously high, a very important acquisition. After fitting it up for the purpose of the School at his own expense, he commenced the first Free Common School on the Pacific Coast on the twenty-sixth of December, 1849. He began and continued through the whole term of his services, strictly on the free principle. The beginning was humble, the first attendance being only *three* scholars.—Very few families had then arrived. Up to the first of April, 1850, a little more than three months, *one hundred and thirty children* had received instruction in the school, and during this time about *two hundred dollars* in donations had been contributed for his support, amounting to not more than one half of the expense necessarily incurred before the School commenced, in fitting up the house, etc.

About the first of April commenced a new era in the history of the School, by its being placed under the patronage and control of the city. The School having so much increased that an assistant was required, the services of Mrs. Pelton were rendered in this capacity, and were continued until the resignation of Mr. Pelton in the Autumn of 1851. On the twenty-ninth of March, 1850, the Ayuntamiento passed a resolution employing Mr. and Mrs. Pelton as teachers, with a salary of five hundred dollars per month; and on the eighth of April, 1850, a School Ordinance was passed, adopting it as a City Free School, and instituting regulations for its management. [See this Ordinance on page 92 of this pamphlet.]

During the term commencing April 1st, 1850, one hundred and forty-eight pupils were admitted, between the ages of four and sixteen. In order to show the nativity and mixed character of the School at that early period, the following is extracted from the teacher's report: [First Public School Report to the Common Council, May 4th, 1850.]

Birth Places.—Maine, 1; New Hampshire, 2 Vermont, 1; Massachusetts, 4; Rhode Island, 3; New York, 15; New Jersey, 4; Pennsylvania, 5; Maryland, 3; Ohio, 3; Iowa, 3; Wisconsin, 3; Tennessee, 1; Missouri, 5; Mississippi, 1; Louisiana, 14; Arkansas, 6, Oregon, 1; California, 2. Total in the United States, 77. England, 5; Scotland, 4; Ireland, 5; Germany, 1; France, 1; Chili, 20; Peru, 1; Australia, 20; New Zealand, 15; Sandwich Islands, 3. Total foreign, 75.

The branches taught were chiefly the elementary, which were all the wants of the school thrn required, consisting mainly of reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, history, surveying, and algebra.

The school continued steadily to increase and prosper, having at one time nearly three hundred pupils on the list of attendance. After the fire of June 22d, 1851, the house requiring repairs, the School was removed to the Methodist Chapel on Powell street, and soon again to Rev. Mr. Hunt's Church on Jackson street, both of which places were furnished free till about the first of September, 1851, when Mr. Pelton's services as teacher ceased, and the school closed. Up to this time more than *eleven hundred* scholars had received instruction in the School.

On the twenty-fifth of September following, soon after the close of Mr. Pelton's School, an elaborate Free Common School Ordinance was matured and adopted by the Common Council, and at the same time an appropriation of $35,000 was made, which, with the addition of $25,000 previously ordered for school purposes, was constituted a School Fund. By means of these liberal provisions, Common Schools were established in various parts of the city and placed on a permanent basis.

Most of the above facts are probably familiar to the old residents of this city. I have been induced to give this brief sketch of our *first* Free School, and to notice Mr. Pelton prominently in connection with it, because evident attempts have been made to deprive him of the honor of having been instrumental in *commencing* the Free School enterprise in this city. I feel it a duty to disabuse the public mind of false impressions which have been made in regard to him from *certain quarters*, and, I believe from *very unworthy motives*. In my next article, [the following] I shall attempt to show the ungenerous means by which this has been done.

JUSTICE.

[From the S. F. Herald July 14th, 1854.]

"Stolen Thunder."

Editor of the Herald:—In my previous paper, [the preceding,] I gave a brief sketch of the origin and history of the first free common school in this city, showing that it was established by the individual efforts of Mr.

Pelton. I regret that in recent and also more remote transactions, evident attempts have been made to deprive him of the credit his early services in the cause of education in this city truly merits. Reports and numerous complimentary editorial notices of his school appeared in the public prints of [1849] '50, and was the theme of frequent remark. I was therefore much surprised when I read the report of the addresses at the late dedication of the Bush street school house. A disposition appears to have been manifested to wink out of sight Mr. Pelton's labors and sacrifices in establishing his school, and to foist into notice the one in Happy Valley as the pioneer. This course not only does Mr. Pelton great injustice, but also those early members of the Council who officially exerted their influence to sustain him in this most laudable enterprise.

At the dedication, Rev. S. H. Willey, in giving a history of the Bush street school, with singular disingenuousness, studiously avoided any allusion to the one commenced nearly seven months before, and spoke of the suffering children in 1850; and said that "little was the care that could be bestowed upon their manners or their education," and "were rambling about in search of amusement by the dozen." At this very period Mr. Pelton's school had a good representation from Happy Valley, and still had room for more. After bringing down his history of the school to the middle of 1851—more than a *year and a half* after that of Mr. Pelton commenced—the speaker continues: "*Meantime* other schools of a similar character had sprung up," thus plainly implying that the Bush street interest was long prior to all others. Residing here at the time, he could not have been ignorant of the facts.

John A. Wills, Esq., followed, in a neat and eloquent speech, but was evidently misled* by the previous speaker in regard to dates and facts. Mr. W. remarked, "If I am correctly informed, this is the first free school established on the shores of the Pacific," which was again repeated in another connection. This statement passed uncorrected, so far as appears, by subsequent speakers, who knew it to be erroneous, and claimed for that school what does not belong to it. [All Reporters present gained the same false ideas in the premises, from the "previous speaker" (Mr. Willey) as did Mr. Wills and others. This will hereafter appear most evident. J. C. P.]

The facts in regard to this school are, that it was commenced at the suggestion and hearty co-operation of Mr. Pelton, who gratuitously furnished the first teacher with school books, and offered to relinquish to him a part of his own salary, provided he would commence the school on the free plan. This proposition was not acceded to by Mr. Newton, and tuition fees were received from all who would pay, up to the time the school was taken under the supervision of the Board, in the Fall of 1851.

In this connection I cannot omit to mention the unfair course pursued some time since by the late Superintendent, Mr. Nevins, towards Mr. Pelton. Until within a short time before his appointment, Mr. N. always took a lively interest in Mr. Pelton's school, and had maintained a friendly intercourse with him. In a letter now before me, written by Mr. Nevins, he says: "Mr. J. C. Pelton is the principal of the school first established in this city, and has sustained it from the beginning at great sacrifice, and with distinguished ability." But he seems subsequently to have indulged in a personal pique against him, which he appears to have remembered when writing his school reports.

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* Mr. Wills informed me at the time that he was "misled"—much to his regret. J.C.P.

Mr. Pelton's labors of nearly two years in teaching a free school in this city, is not once alluded to in them, excepting once, in the very equivocal manner shown below. The idea runs through the whole of them, that the "free common school enterprise" commenced at his induction into office, which was just after Mr. Pelton resigned. The following, among others, is a sample: In his first annual report he commences thus: "At the close of the first year of the free common school enterprise in this city, the Superintendent takes the liberty," etc. This piece of vanity has been very justly commented upon by one of the city papers. [San Francisco *Whig*—See Page 84. J. C. P.]

In his first quarterly report, in which the pronoun "I" figures very conspicuously, is found the following pitiable allusion to Mr. Pelton's services: "I find that divers warrants have been paid out of these tax moneys [the school fund] for purposes not recognized by the charter, nor by the ordinance creating the free common schools, in the shape of gratuities, for *ex parte*, gratuitous services, claimed to have been rendered long previously to the ordering of the free school tax, and before the passage of the free school ordinance, to wit: [here follows a list of payments made by the city to Mr. Pelton for services as teacher of the public school.] "All this amount has been improperly paid out of the moneys paid into the free common school fund, from the collection of the free school taxes, for services rendered long before the tax was ordered, and in open violation of the provisions of the free school ordinance."

Mr. Nevins was remonstrated with by a resident, clergyman, Rev. J. W. Capen, for his injustice to Mr. Pelton, (Mr. P. being absent from the city.) He replied that he could not find the evidence from the records of his being employed by the city (!) [At this date there were standing upon "*Public Records*" of the Common Council of the city, the first *Resolution* employing me and the "Ordinance for the regulation of Common Schools." See p. 92. J. C. P.] The evidence, [*i. e.* the above resolution and ordinance] was afterwards furnished him, and he *promised* to correct his statement through the press. This correction has never been made. * *

The fairness of Mr. Nevins' statement may be appreciated from the fact that the appropriation of $25,000 was made expressly with the view of paying Mr. Pelton for his services, in accordance with the above resolution.

The same *first* quarterly report states that "a large majority of the children have *just now* for the *first time* entered American schools." Recollect this was more than *two years* from the commencement of the first free school, which included a large portion of those at this very time distributed among the various districts. In accounting for the great improvement of the scholars, he seems not unwilling to acknowledge *other* agencies than that of their previous instruction, as I perceive the *climate* comes in for a share of the credit: "These schools most strikingly illustrate the superior excellence of our climate!"

At the close of the Report he waxes grandiloquent: "Our free school system is the glory of San Francisco. Its fame has reached our fatherland, and the wise and good are sending back their gratulations and *peans* of praise to this infant giant in these ends of the Earth."

A rather speedy return of the responsive "peans," before the completion of the telegraph, taking for granted his construction of the time of the commencement of free school operations. The fact is, Mr. Pelton's reports had been re-published in the Atlantic States a long time before Mr. Nevins' connection with our Schools, and it is certainly very modest in him to appropriate to his own work of three months the returning "gratulations" and "peans."

Sufficient has been quoted to illustrate the spirit of these Reports. I have no personal hostility towards Mr. Nevins, and only regret that his own misrepresentations have rendered these explanations necessary.

JUSTICE.

NOTE.—"Justice" was an old and honored citizen of the earliest days of San Francisco, having no connection whatever with the Public School Department. J. C. P.

[From the San Francisco Globe, May, 1856.]

Origin of the San Francisco Public Schools, and the Naming of the "Denman" School.

The following communication from the Superintendent of Public Schools was read in the last meeting of the Board of Education:

SAN FRANCISCO, May 7th, 1856.

TO THE HON. BOARD OF EDUCATION:

Gentlemen:—In a resolution adopted by your Hon. Board on Monday evening last, by which you confer upon the Bush Street School, the name of its late teacher (Mr. Denman) you are pleased to style that gentleman *the pioneer teacher in the Public Schools in this city*, several members of your honorable body remarking in the support of the resolution offered, that Mr. Denman was the *first* teacher in the *first* American Public School established in this city or on the Pacific coast.

I was much gratified by the compliment, so well deserved, which your honorable body was pleased to award to that gentleman; it was entirely consonant with my feelings towards him, as an esteemed friend, and with my estimation of his claims. But in styling Mr. Denman the "first," and "pioneer" teacher in the public schools in this city, an error was committed which, in justice to the public, who should be correctly informed in a matter of public interest, and also in justice to those persons by whose efforts the public school system was first introduced and the first school organized, I trust your honorable body will so modify or amend the resolution referred to, as to allow it to convey none but a correct understanding of an important matter connected with the early history of this city and its cherished institution of free education.

Whatever credit should attach to those persons by whose efforts the free School System was first introduced and sustained, I beg to say, cannot with justice be awarded to others than myself and those who aided me in my efforts in this department, during the early history of this city. Of this fact, several members of your honorable body must be aware. A member of the family of *one of your number* shared the benefits of the Public Schools of which I was the teacher nearly one year (I think) previous to the organization of the school* to which Mr. Denman was subsequently elected Principal. Your ob't sev't,

J. C. PELTON.

* Mr. Fishbourne immediately arose and stated that it was his daughter, who attended Mr. Pelton's school. He had arrived in California in the latter part of 1850, was aware of Mr. Pelton's early efforts in the Public School; thought justice should be extended to him even at this late day; thought the resolution referred to in the Communication of the Superintendent should be amended. This was objected to by several members of the Board. Mr. Blake moved to lay the Communication upon the table for the present. On this motion being objected to it was withdrawn. It was moved by *Mr. Janes* and carried, that it be referred to the Committee on Text Books, with instructions to ascertain the facts connected with the early history of the Public Schools of this city and report to the Board at he next meeting. [*This Committee never reported.*]

Mr. Sherman remarked, that Mr. Denman did not claim to be the first teacher; thought Mr. Pelton was entitled to that credit. [Mr. D. of course never did advance any *such* pretension. J. C. P.]

Mr. Hooper said he did not vote for the resolution styling Mr. Denman the *pioneer teacher* with all his heart; he knew about Mr. Pelton's efforts in this matter. Mr. P. came to him in 1849 with a letter from his brother in Boston, in which letter he was informed by his brother. that Pelton was about leaving Boston *with the object of establishing a Public School in California.*

When Mr. Pelton came to him he advised him, that his prospects were anything but encouraging, that he had better establish a private or tuition school, or better yet go to work. Mr. P. did go to work and made money, and then established a public school, which he frequently visited with his wife, and was much pleased to witness the zeal and interest manifested by Mr. Pelton and his lady; it was a large school. He would like to see a history of the whole matter.

Mr. Sherman hoped the communication would be referred to the Committee on Text Books, and that they would present a brief historical sketch and give credit to whom credit was due; that the report should be spread upon the records of the Board. The communication was so referred.

L. Sage, H. B. Janes, Geo. Seger, said Committee on Text Books.

NOTE.—I claim no credit for having first suggested the establishment of the above school. Its first teacher (Mr. Newton) came to me seeking employment. He wished to assist me. Not requiring his services in my school, I suggested to him the establishment of a *free* school in Happy Valley, the inhabitants of that locality having become numerous and desirous of Public School facilities. I encouraged and slightly assisted

Mr. Newton in his undertaking, in which he was partially successful, but ere long tired of gratuitous labor, or, at best, very limited support, and left the city.

I next advised a Mr. Rogers to undertake the Happy Valley free school enterprise, and, to help along, supplied him with school books—to be gratuitous as long as his school was free. Mr. Rogers becoming dissatisfied with his prospects, left—for the mines, I believe.

Then a Mr. Cooley, after having spent a short time seeking a position in my school, undertook the continuance of the "Happy Valley Free School." [See papers of that date.] Mr. Cooley was a worker, indefatigable, and under his administraton the school gained the recognition and partial support of the city as a Public School; and about this time it gained the friendly assistance and influence of Rev. S. H. Willey and Mr. Nevins; and a Sunday School was in some manner connected with the week-day school; and from this Sunday School, I believe, the Natoma Street Presbyterian Church (Mr. Willey's) had its origin.

The above School becomes Permanently Established.

The next Principal of this school after Mr. Cooley left, (and after the adoption of the *second* school ordinance, prepared in whole or in part by Mr. Nevins, Superintendent,) was Mr. James Denman, elected November 17, 1851,*—(later Principal of the Bush Street afterwards "Denman" School; in 1860–61, Superintendent of Public Schools; now Principal of the new school, corner of Bush and Taylor streets.)

As a teacher, I especially, rejoice in the compliments and honors which have been extended to a personal friend and fellow-laborer. I only regret that the above action was not taken with noble and disinterested motives, rather than with the apparent design of obscuring, if not denying, the fact that another Public School had had a prior existence.

J. C. P.

Mr. Douglas and his School.

San Jose, August 11th, 1864.

Messrs. Wm. G. Badger, J. F. Pope, and D. Lunt, Committee on Common Schools:

Dear Sirs,—I ask pardon for having so long neglected to answer your letter. In mine to Mr. Carlton last week, I mentioned the cause of the delay.

In reply to the subject matter of your communication, I would state, that I left San Francisco in the autumn of 1850, before the city had passed any act organizing a system of public schools, and have not resided there since. I am not, therefore, familiar from personal observation, with the facts attending the establishment of that system under Mr. Nevins. The School taught by Mr. Marston, in 1847 was doubtless a strictly private one. That taught by myself in 1848, I think, should be called a Public School.*

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* On the same day a school was opened on Powell street.

In my letter to Mr. Carlton, which I would refer you to, I gave some reasons for entertaining that opinion. The one taught by Mr. Pelton in the old Baptist Church on Washington street, in 1849, was at first certainly a Private School.†

After the action of the city authorities appropriating scrip for its support, and employing himself and wife as teachers, with a salary of five hundred dollars a month, it might be called a Public School.

With respect to the main point of all, viz: whether Mr. Nevins should be called the Founder of the Free Public School System‡ of San Francisco. my opinion is that no one deserves so much credit to himself alone. Every voter, who by his ballot, favored its organization, and support: every tax payer, (whether favoring or opposing), was, to some extent, a founder of that system. In this last respect scarcely a man in the city was *less* its founder than Mr. Nevins. But if the credit due mainly to the community is to be conferred upon one man, because he did *more* for the object than any other, then I think Mr. Nevins is the individual.

Respectfully yours, THOMAS DOUGLAS.

[Extract from a letter from Davis Louderback to J. C. Pelton, 1857.]

It was through your instrumentality that the first *free school* was opened some time about the latter part of December, 1849, and I sent two of my youngest children on Washington street, a few doors below Stockton street, and you instructed the children yourself. I sent my children just about the time you opened, and continued sending them for some time. I never paid you anything for instructing them.

San Francisco, June, 1864.

Gentlemen of Com. School Committee:

We, the undersigned, firmly believe that the credit of inaugurating the Free School System in San Francisco is due to our frinnd and esteemed citizen, John C. Pelton, Esq.

R. C. MOORE,
[Of firm of E. Gilbert & Co., Publisher Alta California, 1849.]
GEO. L. FAULKNER,
[Of Pacific News, in 1849.]

E. T. BATTURS,
[Tax-Collector in '53, '54, '55.]
WM. FAULKNER,
[Editor and Proprietor of Pa-Pacific News, in 1849.]
H. K. W. CLARK.

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* For the true character of Mr. Douglas' school, see the statement of the Trustees thereof, Part II, pages 32 and 33. J. C. P.

† Mr. Douglas' assertion that Mr. Pelton's School "was certainly a Private School," is an ingenious statement. It was a public school—free for the whole city—and NOT a tuition school, for a single day. See above letter of an old and esteemed citizen, Mr. D. Louderback. J C. P.

‡ There has been no such questions raised as this: it is a question begged by those who are not willing to answer the true one, viz: "Who in your opinion INAUGURATED the Free School System of this city?" No one doubts that Mr. Nevins had something to do with drawing up the THIRD School Act of this city. But did that make him the "Founder of Public Schools in this City and State?" J. C. P.

COMMITTEE OF COMMON SCHOOLS:

Gentlemen,—I arrived in San Francisco on May 4th, 1850, and very soon after, I believe in the same month, for want of a better way, (possibly) of passing an occasional evening, attended some of the lectures upon different subjects that were delivered in the old frame building, known as the Baptist Church, on the north side of Washington street, just below Stockton. It stood where the brick church now stands; one room, common benches with board backs, a "redwood carpet," a rough pine altar, I believe, made the church; and it was used during the week by Mr. J. C. Pelton and wife as a school-room, and had been so used by them, as I am informed, for a public school-room, as far back as December, 1849. * * * *

W. W. CHIPMAN.

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 4th, 1865.

My Dear Sir: * * * * * From the best of my recollection you were the first to establish a Public School in the city of San Francisco.

Very Respectfully,

HENRY M. NAGLEE.

MR. J. C. PELTON.

[Extract from a letter from Thos. Tilden, formerly Tilden and Little, to J. C. Pelton, 1857.]

I remember as well as I remember anything which transpired outside my immediate business, and in which I had no direct personal interest, that in the fall of 1849 *you* established the *first* and to my knowledge the only *Free Public School* organized in this city; and it was by no little perseverance and effort you were enabled to collect together a small class of children from the then few and scattered families of the town to teach them the first rudiments of education, relying entirely upon the generosity of an enlightened and liberal community to sustain you in your laudable enterprise. Not only was the tuition gratuitous, but the books necessary for the use of the school furnished by the same liberal hand; and how successful and beneficial the results which followed this noble enterprise under your fostering care, and subsequently with the assistance of your good lady, the children of those days at least can no doubt bear testimony.

Your friend,

THOS. TILDEN.

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 16th, 1865.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON ORIGIN COMMON SCHOOLS:

Gentlemen,—In answer to your inquiry in relation to the inauguration of Free Schools in this city, I beg to say, that early in the Spring of 1849, while in Boston, I heard that a young man and his wife were about to sail from that city for California, with the object of establishing there a Free School, or Schools. I felt an interest to know more of an undertaking which then seemed so novel. Accordingly, I took occasion to visit the ship in which the gentleman and lady—then strangers to me—were about to take their departure. I was there introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Pelton. I saw their school books, &c., of which they had a large quantity—I was also shown a bell which, I believe was to be presented to the First Grammar School in San Francisco, by N. A. Hooper & Co., Boston. I freely conversed with Mr. Pelton in reference to his purpose and plans to be carried out in California. On my subsequent arrival in San Francisco, February, 1850, I learned of the accomplishment of that object for which I knew him to have left the East in 1849. I therefore shall, in answer to the enquires of your circular—in view of the foregoing, and having heard of no other public school prior to that established by Mr. Pelton, that in my opinion, the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System of this city does, of right, truth, and justice, belong to Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Pelton.

Respectfully, yours,

DAVID HEWES.

CONSULATE CF U. S. OF AMERICA, ASPINWALL, COL'M. Jan. 25, 1865.

WM. E. BADGER, J. E. POPE, D. LUNT; COMMITTEE:

Gentlemen,—In response to the question propounded in the first paragraph of your note, I answer, that the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System in San Francisco belongs, in my opinion, to J. C. Pelton, Esq.

I cannot give the precise date on which the First Free School was opened in San Francisco; but I recollect well the school of Mr. Pelton in the Old Baptist Chapel, in the latter part of 1849, or the early part of 1850, and it is my firm belief that the school of Mr. Pelton was the first one opened in San Francisco, and was taught by himself.

I am, very respectfully, your obd't serv't,

FRANCIS W. RICE.

ASPINWALL, Jan, 26th, 1865.

MY DEAR SIR:— * * * I never doubted that the people of California owe you a heavy debt of gratitude, for your efforts in behalf of the "rising generation;" especially, when the many great discouragements under which you labored at the early period of your task, is taken into consideration.

With great regard,

FRANCIS W. RICE.

J. C. PELTON, Esq.

When about closing this publication, already too much extended, I addressed the following communications to Rev'ds. Willey and Williams, feeling disposed to concede every possible courtesy to those differing with me.

The correspondence explains itself. J. C. P.

CORRESPONDENCE.

San Francisco, Feb. 4th, 1865.

Rev. A. Williams:

Dear Sir,—Some time since, because my friends asserted facts in regard to my connection with the origin of the Free Public Schools of this city, I was styled, by inference at least, "only a hypothetical, apocryphal pretender,"—See correspondence in the *Evening Bulletin*, June 17th, 1864, signed "A. W." [Albert Williams. ?] To avoid all such questionable compliments hereafter, I am about publishing a pamphlet, entitled "Origin of the Free Public Schools of San Francisco." Enclosed are a few pages from same, which may especially interest you. If you find anything therein which you think should, from any just and good reason, be different—be changed or modified—please inform me at once, through the post-office, and I will be happy to meet your views, if possible.

Respectfully, yours,

J. C. PELTON.

To the above no answer has been received at this date, Feb. 28th, 1865. J. C. P.

San Francisco, Feb. 4th, 1865.

Rev. S. H. Willey:

Dear Sir,—If you observe anything in the enclosed pages which you think, from any just reason, should be changed or modified, or in any way amended, please let me know through the Post Office, and I will be happy to meet your views, if possible.

Yours, truly,

J. C. PELTON.

To the above I received the following reply.

San Francisco, Feb. 7th, 1865.

Mr. J. C. Pelton:

Dear Sir,—Yours of yesterday with "proof" is received. In reply, I have only this to say: If "the letter of Rev. S. H. W. (page 91.) was never before the Committee on C. S." I do not think it ought to be referred to in this publication. If it is referred to, I think it should be given in full.

Again: p. 94—It is a mistake, when it is said, that Rev. S. H. W., on any occasion, "made *that* School (the Bush Street School) the *first* or *pioneer*, from which all the other Public Schools," &c. Whoever so understood me, misunderstood—for I never said or thought so. Consequently, that paragraph should be omitted, or materially modified.

Yours, truly,
S. H. WILLEY.

To meet the views of Mr. Willey as far as possible, I have deferred publication, and added the pages necessary to contain his letter, with such comments thereon as the "truth of history" requires. I might, with propriety, be excused from incurring the inconvenience of giving place to this detailed *eulogy* upon Mr. Nevins' services, *after* his election as Superintendent, and several years after the Free Public School System had been inaugurated. Whatever his services may have been (and all will grant that they were faithful and efficient) at the period referred to, they surely could have had no connection with—nothing at all to do with—constituting Mr. Nevins the "FOUNDER of the Common Schools in this city and State.*" But, as I am always willing and desirous to give both sides of this question a fair hearing, I cheerfully give place to the letter in full. See page 115.

Since the receipt of the above, I have learned that Mr. Willey presented his letter in person to the chairman of the Committee on Common Schools, with the request that it be read in open board, which request was complied with. If it was not strictly "before the Committee," it was because he chose to present it at the last moment, after the report had been presented, and before action had been taken on it. Although not before the committee, it was thus before the Board, and consequently is public property, and no breach of propriety committed in giving it publicity.

The point made by Mr. Willey on my note, p. 94, is not well taken. All who heard or read Mr. Willey's remarks on the occasion referred to, drew the same inference, to wit: that Mr. Willey's address *was* intended to sketch the rise of Public or Free School Education in this city, and to make *that* School (the Bush street or "Denman") the initial point, or nucleus, from which (*in the language of said address*) "meantime, other Schools of a similar character had sprung up in different parts of the city." The speakers following Mr. Willey obtained this idea, as one then informed me, and reiterated his mistake; and the city press re echoed the key-note of the address.—See morning papers of June 13th, 1864—and subsequently, the Board of Education, when naming it the "Denman" School sought to perpetuate the fiction by denominating its teacher "the *pioneer* teacher in the Public Schools of this city."

I called on Mr. Willey at the time, and *did* obtain a short interview upon the subject of *his* history of the Schools, as given by himself on the above occasion. I requested him, in some way, to correct the errors which, I thought, he had made and caused others to make. He did not see fit to do so—indeed, would not admit that any mistake had been made by himself or others; nor did he *then* intimate that he had been "misunderstood" as to what he had said or "thought," but seemed perfectly satisfied with the whole matter, and especially so with *his* part therein. How much or how little Mr. Willey has been in fault in this whole proceeding, and how far his errors have contributed towards securing my recent troubles, in the School Department, I leave others to decide.

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* Epitaph.

In addition to the several preceding articles having reference to the dedicatory exercises referred to above, I will introduce and call attention to the two following, and leave the reader to draw his own conclusion:

[From the Daily Chronicle, June 16th, 1854]

Free Schools.

The following communication is given as an act of justice to a gentleman and lady whom we knew as teachers of the First Free School in this city. We visited their school and witnessed with pleasure the system and efforts which they made to "teach the young idea." It is strange, very strange, that those who knew the truth should have forgotten it, or hid it under a bushel. It is not too late, however, to do justice. We hope that no such unworthy and utterly contemptible feeling as sectarianism, had aught to do in effecting such omission.

EDITORS CHRONICLE:—Which was the first public school in San Francisco; when was it commenced; and by whom?

I was led to make these inquiries after reading the addresses of Rev. S. H. Willey and John H. Wills, Esq., at the late dedication of the new school house on Bush street. I had previously read notices and reports of a public school, and persons connected therewith, in '49, '50 and 51, which by those addresses would seem to be consigned to oblivion.

Those gentleman were doubtless laboring under a missapprehension of facts in relation to the early history of public schools in San Francisco.

Now, in justice to the former city authorities, as well as to individuals, allow me to make the following statement:

J. C. Pelton arrived in California in the fall of 1849. He came to this, at that time, new country to make for himself and family a permanent home, and to do what he could for the interest of Public Schools, with which institutions he had long been connected in the eastern States.

He came prepared, bringing with him an abundant supply of the best school books in use at home.

Immediately on landing on these shores, he commenced his inquiries in relation to his long cherished object.

He found friends, and through them the free use of the Baptist Chapel, on Washington street, was cheerfully tendered to accommodate the school should his enterprise prove successful. *Three scholars were gathered*, and the *first* free Public School in San Francisco commenced Dec. 26, '49.

This school, to pupils, was *free*, they paying only for their books, being sustained by Mr. P.'s own scanty means, and an occasional donation from friends of the cause, until the first of April, 1850, when this school, then numbering about *one hundred* scholars was *cheerfully* adopted by the Ayuntamienta or Town Council of San Francisco, and Mr. and Mrs. Pelton were engaged to continue the school as teachers, at a salary of $500 per month in scrip for their united services.

* * * *

Doubtless, Mr. and Mrs. Pelton have watched with interest and pleasure the improvements and progress of their former charge; and doubtless, too, they have been much surprised by seeing remarks of the above named gentlemen, knowing as they do, and as we well remember, that the "Happy Valley School" is a legitimate branch of what was once their own cherished school; and that its two first teachers, Mr. S. Newton and Mr. S. Rogers, received their active co-operation in sustaining that school and gaining for it that permanency which it now enjoys.

The above facts are so familiar to those acquainted with the early history of San Francisco, that it seems astonishing they should have been overlooked on the occasion referred to. CITIZEN SINCE '49.

[From the San Francisco Herald, September 24th, 1854.]

Mr. Pelton and the Public Schools.

EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—In jutice to a most worthy citizen, allow me a small space in your columns, for the statement of a few facts in relation to the early connection of Mr. J. C. Pelton with the Public Schools of this city.

Mr. Pelton not only established the first Public School, but supported it, and that too at the sacrifice of all he possessed. I remonstrated with him at the time for pursuing such a course, when the golden moments of California were rapidly passing, and asked him if he thought he was doing right to sacrifice his time and money, and to devote his whole attention to a public good without renumeration? His reply was: "I came to California to establish a Public School, or Schools, and I shall do it, if at the sacrifice of everything I have on earth." He did so.

It has been said he received for his own and his wife's services, five hundred dollars per month. It is true, that some time during the summer of '50, after he had labored months without any reward, the Common Council passed an ordinance providing to pay him that amount in city scrip, and that scrip was worth at the time 28 to 35 cents on the dollar, making a cash salary of about one hundred and forty or fifty dollars per month for the united services of Mr. and Mrs. Pelton and their Assistants.

Shall those who are knowing to the facts in this matter remain silent, and allow others to come in, reap the reward and claim the credit of their acts of disinterested philanthropy? For philanthropy it was, at that period of California history, for two persons of ability to devote their time and talents for the promotion of a public interest of such magnitude, for a mere nominal compensation. Shall not J. C. Pelton and his estimable lady, after toiling to accomplish what they did, have reason to feel that their services and magnanimous acts are duly appreciated by this community? For one I would say, if he cannot be otherwise suitably and justly rewarded, let him be placed right before the community, even at this late day, and let it be written on history's page:—"Mr. J. C. Pelton opened and taught the first American Public School on the Pacific Coast." J. E.

[Dr. Jas. Edwards.]

Letter of Rev. S. H. Willey.

COLLEGE OF CALIFORNIA, Sept. 19th, 1864.

COMMITTEE ON COMMON SCHOOLS, BOARD OF EDUCATION, SAN FRANCISCO:

Gentlemen,—Your letter of June, 1864, was duly received. The question you propose is this: "To whom, in your opinion, belongs the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System in this city?" My answer is, without hesitation, Thos. J. Nevins. He arrived in California in January, 1850. During that year he was frequently calling public attention through the press, and otherwise, to the necessity of establishing Common Schools. From the Public Records of our city government, it appears that Mr. Nevins first urged upon the Common Council the importance of providing for public instruction through the system of "Free Common Schools." The measure awakened much discussion and strong opposition, but finally prevailed. Mr. Nevins prepared the bill, entitled an Act for the Establishment, Regulation and Support of Free Common Schools in the City of San Francisco, which became a law in September, 1851. It is evident that the "credit of having inaugurated the Free School System of this city" belongs to Mr. Nevins; inasmuch as without his efforts, there is no probability that efficient action would have been taken by the City Government. Furthermore, it is abundantly apparent, both from the Public Records of the City Government and those of the Board of Education, that his agency was as prominent in putting the system into operation as it had been in introducing it. He was appointed Superintendent of Schools in October, 1851. Under the instructions of the Board of Education, he immediately proceeded to procure rooms for the use of the schools in those parts of the city where they were most needed. Under his personal superintendence, they were fitted up and provided with the necessary furniture. Teachers were employed, the schools were opened, and he labored diligently to overcome all prejudices against such public schools, both by writing and publishing, and by extensively visiting families throughout the city. He at once put in operation the provisions of the law, which he had himself drawn, with repect to the raising of revenue for the support of the Schools and thus provided the means of sustaining them. The obstacles that were then in the way of this work can only be appreciated by those who were here at that time. It was only by indomitable perseverance that he overcame them. When the system began to be in working order, the Board of Education requested Mr. Nevins to recommend a basis of Classification of the Schools. This he did at length in an elaborate report, extending from the Primary and Grammar departments to the High School and Female Seminary departments; it even embraced, in subatance, the plan of the Industrial School. This frame-work of our System of City Schools was, in substance, adopted and though it has been amended, developed and improved in the light of subsequent experience, the idea of the system is the same. Moreover, he secured the reservation of city lots for School use from city sales, and by this wise forethought, secured exceedingly valuable possessions to the

School department. All these facts, and many more of a similar character, are matters of Public Record, and within the recollection of all who were concerned in the work of establishing the Schools at that time. It is not easy to see, therefore, how it can be reasonably doubted that "the credit of having inaugurated the Free School System of San Francisco," belongs to Mr. Nevins. To be sure, others rendered substantial service with him in the same good cause; but his was the leading, the organizing part. This I give not only as my opinion, but as a fact within my personal knowledge, to which also, all the Public Records of the city touching the subject, bear testimony. Permit me to suggest, that aside from these records, the most competent witnesses in the premises, are the members of the first Board of Education, most of whom are now in the city and may easily be consulted.

With respect to the four appended inquiries concerning the date of the "First Free Public School," &c., I have not the means at hand of answering them with accuracy. Nor do I consider them at all pertinent to the subject under inquiry. So far as I know the facts relative to them, they are correctly detailed in the "Annals of San Francisco," and in the report of the City Superintendent of Schools in 1859. I well remember, that there were several schools in operation in different parts of the city in 1849 and 1850. I often visited them, and was well acquainted with some of the teachers, they were sustained in various ways, some by subscription, some by tuition, and some in part by donations of public funds; but *none of them were under the supervision of any public authority*, nor could there be said to be any "*system of schools*" in existence in San Francisco till the law [ordinance?] drawn by Mr. Nevins went into operation in 1851.

I remain yours, very respectfully,

S. H. WILLEY.

Review of Rev. S. H. Willey's Letter. By Madison Hawes, Esq.

BROOKLYN, ALAMEDA, CO. CAL., Jan. 21, 1865.

MR. JOHN C. PELTON:

Dear Sir,—I understand you are about publishing the Report of the Committee of the Board of Education, appointed to investigate the facts in relation to the origin of our Public Schools, and accompanying documents. In answer to the circular of that committee, I responded succinctly to its inquiries. It now appears, that the large number of persons thus addressed almost unanimously gave you the credit of having inaugurated the Common School system in San Francisco. There are, however, two or three exceptions, and among them is the response of Rev. Mr. Willey, of the "College of California." His statement of the facts appears so unfair and incorrect and so unjust towards your school, as to call for some notice in the publication of the report. His whole answer is predicated on the assumption that we had no Common School system, and no Public School, until the induction of Mr. Nevins into the office of Superintendent; and your school, established nearly two years before, is not only ignored as a Free School, but statements made at variance from the facts of the case, if the "public records," to which he so frequently refers, prove anything.

In charity to this gentleman, I come to the inevitable conclusion that he has but very superficially examined these records, as they so utterly fail to sustain him in many of the statements made in his reply. Mr. Nevins is represented as being the pioneer and prime mover in calling the attention of the city council and of the public to "the importance of providing for public instruction." Unfortunately, for the verification of this and other similar statements, a careful examination of the city records has failed to show that his name is in any way connected with schools until some time in August, 1851. As a sample of the lack of proof so confidently claimed, Mr. Nevins is given the credit of having by "wise forethought," "secured the reservation of city lots for school use." In addition to the records, the testimony of the first Board of Education is appealed to as proof. On consulting the records and members of the first Board, the following result is arrived at: This matter was first called up in the council by Judge Murray, as early as the first of 1850. A member of the first Board of Education who first introduced it in that body and secured its successful action, states that Mr. Nevins' influence and agency in the matter was confined to carrying out the action of the Board. Again, "during that year [1850,] he [Mr. N.] was frequently calling public attention through the Press and otherwise, to the necessity of establishing common schools." If a single line on this subject appeared in the city press during that year from the pen of Mr. Nevins, I have failed to see it. On the other hand, the press was "frequently calling public attention" from 1849 onwards to your school, and your agency in its *establishment*, as an accomplished fact.

Almost insurmountable obstacles and prejudices are represented as being in Mr. Nevins' way, after entering on his duties as Superintendent. In what did these obstacles consist? Mr. N. commenced his official duties, backed by the authority of the Board of Education, and with a fund of some $60,000 to draw on to carry out his measures. It appears somewhat singular that such formidable prejudices had to be overcome to induce parents to avail themselves of free instruction in well organized schools. On the other hand, serious obstacles and prejudices, *and a total lack of means, did* exist when you commenced your school. And when the subject was first acted upon in the council, early in 1850, the measure met with very decided opposition in the council.

Great stress is laid on the efficient services rendered the department by Mr. Nevins, while acting as Superintendent. It was his duty to devote his undivided attention to the work, while under the pay of the city, and see that the school fund was wisely expended, and every one cheerfully accorded to him the credit of so doing. That he introduced anything original, either in his draft of the school ordinance, or in his recommendations respecting the classification of the schools, is questionable. It appears that he was familiar with the operation of the free school system at the east, and it was his aim—a very laudable one—to introduce the excellences of that system—there matured by the light of long experience—in San Francisco, where the large and sudden increase of scholars then imperatively demanded a more elaborate system than had previously been enjoyed. But it is conceded, that his work was not so exhaustive and complete but that it was materially " amended, developed and improved " by subsequent Superintendents and Boards. Horace Mann performed herculean labors in reforming the school system of Massachusetts. He toiled, and lectured and wrote, and brought every energy of his comprehensive mind to bear upon his work. On horseback, with his saddle-bags, he visited almost every school district in the State. But who ever dreamed of honoring him as the founder of the common schools of Massachusetts? As a matter of historic interest, we must go back to the time of the Pilgrims of Plymouth rock where some perhaps obscure individual inaugurated a system of popular education, probably imperfect in its beginnings, but momentous in its results.

This is purely a question of fact—"at what date was the first free public school opened" in San Francisco? *not* who has rendered important service in improving this department of learning? In order to answer the question of the committee correctly and satisfactorily, we must first agree as to what constitutes the essential features of a free common school. I apprehend that the following definition will not be called in question, as being *all* that is required to give it that character—a school supported by the public funds and controlled by public authority, with the great central idea carried out, of free education to the masses. Did your school, established in 1850, possess there characteristic features? Let us see.

Mr. Willey refused to answer the question of the committee in regard to "the date of the first public free school" because "it is not pertinent to the subject under inquiry." Why not? Why so unwilling to acknowledge your school, which was modeled so exactly after those scattered through New England? Did it not possess all the essential features pertaining to and exhibit a sample of the " Free School System?" Does not the establishment of a bank of discount, for instance, inaugurate that system of banking? I submit that it does, and that the multiplication of banks or schools does nothing more, in this sense. Will he contend that, one free school does not develop the free school system as truly as two-three or more; and that it is necessary, under all circumstances, to have all the machinery now in operation, of a board of education with delegated powers, a superintendent, a *pro rata* school tax, &c.? If he strictly insists on the latter condition, then he discards a majority of the New England free schools as such; if on the former, it looks very much like quibbling—a playing on words. A man of straw is set up, that it may be easily knocked down. A "system of schools" [the quotation marks are his own] did not exist in San Francisco "till the law drawn by Mr. Nevins went into operation in 1851." I have failed to notice any discussion on a "system of schools."

Mr. Willey reiterates the statement in the "Annals of San Francisco," written, as I understand by Mr. Nevins himself, and says: "They [the schools of 1849 and 1850] were sustained, some by subscription, some by tuition, and some in part by *donations* of public funds; but none of them were under the supervision of any public authority." It strikes me, that these assertions are very disingenuous, to say the least. It is true, that you did commence your school in December, 1849, when there was no public provision for its support, and but little interest taken in education, relying, for the time, partially on "subscriptions;" but I believe, that even those most unfriendly to your claims, will hardly venture to assert, that a cent was ever charged as a tuition fee during the whole period of its existence. During the first quarter it became apparent that the school could not be sustained by private contributions. It was then that you called the attention of the members of the ayuntamiento to the importance of sustaining your school as a public institution, and caused a petition to be numerously signed and presented to that body, praying for its action in the matter. It is a matter of history and of record that the ayuntiamento did promptly act on the petition. A committee on education was chosen, and an ordinance adopted, entitled "an Ordinance regulating Common Schools." The phraseology of the title carries on the face of it the object that body intended to accomplish by its enactment, and would seem that it should forever silence all cavil as to the subsequent character of your school. The document is not before me, but I recollect, that among its provisions, you were directed to open a school in the Baptist Chapel; that you were required to make a monthly report to the Board; that no tuition fees were to be received; that the school was not to exceed one hundred scholars; prescribed the time for opening and closing the school; the age of scholars eligible to admission; required an order from the Board to entitle to admission; and, in accordance with a vote of the Board, you and your wife were to be paid five hundred dollars per month for your services as teachers. As a matter of fact, the committee on education from time to time visited your school to observe its progress, and give such directions as they thought requisite as to its management. I now submit, whether this action was not taking your school "under the supervision of public authority?"

Mr. Willey says, your school was sustained only "in part" by "donations" of public funds. It is true, the Baptist Society gave the free use of their chapel for a school room. It is also true that your zeal in teaching outran your judgment, or rather a cautious prudence, by receiving all the scholars that applied for admission, until the school finally numbered more than two hundred, instead of one hundred, as limited by the ordinance. By the advice of individual members of the ayuntamiento you employed an assistant, expecting to receive an appropriation for the payment of this extra expenditure. By paying the assistant from your own pocket, and the great depreciation of city scrip, you were, as I well recollect, involved in serious pecuniary embarrassments. At this crisis some of your friends came forward to your relief. This is the whole story about your school being supported only "in part" by public funds. Your salary, as stipulated, was, I believe, paid monthly with the same regularity as other city officials, and not by transient "donations," as a matter of charity. I would ask. whether the liberality of a society, or of individuals towards a free school, changes its character as such? Suppose some opulent individual, in his zeal for popular education, should donate the department a splendid school house, would this generous act take away its character as a free school? Every son of the rural districts of New England is aware, that every common school is there supported "in part" by private "donations." In order to eke out the school money and prolong the school, the fuel—no small item in that inclement climate—is donated by the parents of the pupils, and the master "boards round" gratuitiously among the well-to-do farmers. Instead of a salaried janitor to build the fires and sweep out, I have a recollection of taking my turn in these kinds of donations. If your school is to be repudiated by this exacting criterion, nearly every country school in New England must go by the board.

I am glad to hear you are publishing the School Committee's Report. The singularly unjust course pursued towards you by the Board of Education seems to require this action on your part. After the Committee had done you ample justice in their report, the Board seems to have been disposed to suppress it. They refused to print, after it was in type, professedly on the score of expense, even after the greatest item of expense had been incurred, and the types were "distributed" without a sheet being struck off! This singular action, and the subsequent crusade against you, certainly justifies you now in speaking in your own vindication.

Most truly, yours,

MADISON HAWES.

The following letters were received too late to be inserted in their proper place.—J. C. P.

[Letters of Dr. Henry Gibbons, Ex-Gov. John McDougal, and Ex-Mayor C. J. Brenham, Esq., second Mayor of San Francisco.]

GENTLEMEN:—According to my best recollection Mr. Pelton kept the first School in this city.

C. J. BRENHAM.

To Wm. G. BADGER, and others.

SAN FRANCISCO, July, 1864.

To W. G. BADGER, and others:

Gentlemen,—Your circular containing inquiries in regard to schools is before me. I arrived in San Francisco in the autumn of 1850, and Mr. Pelton and his wife were then conducting a school in the old Baptist Chapel on Washington street, which I understood was a free school. I visited it, occasionally, with much interest. When and by whom it was established, and what salary was paid for teaching, I did not know. But it was plain enough to me that Mr. Pelton had higher purposes in view than the mere salary.

As to the "*system*" of Free Schools, I do no think the credit of founding it belongs to any individual; though, Mr. Pelton certainly merits a liberal share, as he appears to have established the first Free or Common Schools.
Yours, etc.

H. GIBBONS.

To Messrs. Badger, Pope and Lunt, Committee on Origin Public Schools:

Gentlemen,—In answer to your circular, I beg to say: The attempt which has been made to place the laurels which Mr. J. C. Pelton has so justly earned, as the founder and the first to introduce the Public School system on the Pacific Coast, upon the brow of another, seems to demand of those intimate and cognizant of the facts connected with that gentleman's early efforts in the matter, such expressions as will make history a truthful record.

Having taken an active part, as a member of the Constitutional Convention in 1849, in laying the material superstructure for a liberal system of common school education in this State, I was led to watch, with much solicitude, the first efforts to carry out the objects contemplated by the constitution; and I think, either in the fall or winter of 1849, Mr. Pelton was the *very first* to publish his intention of opening a school in this city; and well remember the sympathies expressed and the anxiety manifested by those who looked upon California as their permanent home, as to the difficulties he was encountering, and the subsequent results, in this the first effort to establish the Common School system in our then embryo condition. During the session of the legislature, at San Jose, in 1850–1, Mr. Pelton was there several weeks, assisting the members in the perfection of a school law, which to this day stands without material alteration, as the one now governing our school system; and he was then regarded as its principal author and originator, for he alone labored solely for this purpose.

How any one can attempt to gainsay the claim of J. C. Pelton, as the founder, and the first to devote his entire time to this holy object, I am at a loss to understand, particularly by any one of the first settlers in this city.
Very truly, yours,

JOHN McDOUGAL.

Conclusion.

In closing these pages—already extended much beyond my original design—I wish to say, that I have not been influenced by ill-will, or a wish to wound the feelings of any one—have "set down nought in malice." Justice to myself, and to those who helped me to carry forward my early undertaking to establish free schools in this city, has alone impelled me *now* to place these pages, and the whole subject of which they treat, before the public. I should not have done so, at this or at any future time, had not the most disingenuous efforts been made in the Board of Education to suppress this Report, and consign my name to unmerited oblivion. If I now ruffle the feelings of any, I shall feel that I am blameless. Such will remember "that facts are stubborn things;" and whether those which gathered together here, shall bear me out in "vindicating the truth of history," I leave an unprejudiced, impartial community to decide. The courteous readiness with which those who have been addressed for an expression of opinion upon the subject have responded to the inquiries propounded, would seem to indicate that I am not alone in the knowledge of the *facts*, and in the love of justice in the premises; and to those who have thus so readily and freely favored me by their personal testimony in behalf of the truth, I beg to extend my sincere thanks; and whether prompted and extended in kindness to me, or in support of justice, simply, I shall never cease to remember those favors with the deepest gratitude. The whole matter I leave for the dispassionate consideration of the reader and the public.

J. C. PELTON.

REVIEW.

BY HON. F. M. PIXLEY.

After this pamphlet had been put in type, the proof sheets were submitted for my examination, and I was solicited to make a supplemental review of the whole matter. The evidence being submitted, I am asked to sum up the case. As Mr. Pelton has acted under the professional advice of my law firm since the persecution which commenced against him in the Reverend Mr. Willey's meeting-house, culminating in his removal from the Public Schools, I could not well decline.

I believe, most honestly, that Mr. J. C. Pelton has for fourteen years been the victim of a sectarian and bigoted persecution; that it originated in the determination of certain parties to rob Mr. Pelton of the hard earned fruits of his labors in the first free school of this city, and give them to the Presbyterian colporteur and tract distributor *"who aided to establish Mr. Willey's congregation,"* Mr. T. J. Nevins.

That the scheme has succeeded is no proof that it is not wicked; because it, is orthodox to believe that sometimes the wicked flourish like green bay trees. So long as Mr. & Mrs. Pelton, in the mad gold hunting excitement of 1849 and '50 were content, for starving compensation, to labor in a church out building, to educate gregarious boys and girls, they were unmolested and undisturbed—when they were receiving a salary, (lower than is now paid in gold) in scrip, at thirty cents on the dollar, expending their own means, mortgaging their homestead for bread and meat, the place did not move the ambition, nor stir the cupidity of any; but when the small beginning of a free school became a "SYSTEM," and afforded a Superintendent at a good round salary, and "stocks went up," Col. T. J. Nevins became Superintendent, and J. C. Pelton was driven from the department, and denied even the poor privilege of following his vocation as a teacher.

Mr. J. C. Pelton starved and struggled on till Mr. Nevins' term of office expired, when he again succeeded in obtaining a footing as teacher in the schools he had created, and continued on teaching, and with short intervals for nearly fifteen years, tramps the endless chain of drudgery in the tread mill of the school room, when Mr. T. J. Nevins pays the debt of nature; he dies and is buried; generous friends and admirers bring his remains from beyond the State, plant them in Lone Mountain, with the aid of the Board of Education secure a monument, and on it engrave the chiseled lie, that he was the FOUNDER of the "free school system of this city and State"—and this at the public expense.

While this monumental inscription was being prepared, to rob Mr. Pelton of all he had gained from his early labors, then suddenly, like lightning from a clear sky, came without notice, without charge, without trial, without cause, a resolution from the Board of Education, removing him as a teacher from the Rincon school, and dismissing him from the service of the department.

The monument still stands, lifting its head in solemn asseveration of the falsehood, and is to stand till granite and marble and time decay.

The resolutions of the Board of Education still stand in all their moral repulsiveness, and will stand till some new inspiration prompts the present Board to undo the wrong, or some new Board determines to do the right.

This pamphlet is offered as some of the evidence that can be obtained to determine the question, whether Mr. J. C. Pelton or Mr. T. J. Nevins is entitled to the credit of founding the free school system in San Francisco.

It sums up as follows:

In favor of Mr J. C. Pelton and his claims, the testimony of two hundred and nineteen of the oldest and best citizens of this State, against the testimony of two Presbyterian clergymen, the Reverend S. H. Willey and the Reverend A. Williams, and also one Presbyterian laymen, Deacon Thomas Douglas. The testimony of the Reverend F. C. Ewer and the Reverend S. D. Simonds and the Reverend O. C. Wheeler in favor of Mr. Pelton, against the Reverend Willey and the Reverend Williams, in favor of Mr. Nevins.

The testimony of the Records of the Ayuntamiento, the State government and a political convention, against two evangelical clergymen, who quote from memory the history of recorded facts.

The uniform writings of the early press, the evidence of early editors, the statement of an hundred pioneers against two preachers of the gospel.

The authority of governors, senators, mayors, councilmen, judges, lawyers, doctors, authors—the navy, army and civil service—against the sympathetic testimony of two clergymen and one private.

The full and hearty justice done Mr. Pelton by the Committee on the origin of Common Schools of the present Board of Education in their report, after a long and patient examination.

The testimony of the Board, grudgingly given in its action on this report; but emasculating it of any point, by refusing him the credit which the acknowledged facts call for.

The living testimony of Mr. Nevins over his own signature, against the silent inscription upon the monument that now marks his resting place.

There is and can be no reasonable doubt that this honor belongs to Mr. J. C. Pelton, and belongs to no one else. He has worked for and earned it, and should have it, not divided or parceled out, or given as a compromise; but it should be accorded to him and his wife frankly and freely for their unselfish and heroic struggle in the cause of education, at a time when selfishness was at a premium. Any further discussion of this question is like buttering a slice of the Sanitary cheese.

This monumental inscription is a shameful thing, and the marble should be relieved of the enduring stain by the same chisel that carved the friendly but false epitaph.

The Board of Education should undo the wrong they have done, should expunge from their records all that has been done to Mr. Pelton's prejudice, and he should be reinstated again in the Rincon school, as a vindication of his good name and hard earned reputation.

The letter of Mr. Willey is the special pleading of a partizan advocate, and is not the impartial testimony of a grave and reverend ecclesiastic. It is a kindly sentiment that prompts a rosy epitaph upon the tombstone of a dead friend; but it is questionable theology, and worse morals, that rob Peter to pay Paul.

The letter of the Reverend A. Williams thinks the inscription on the Nevins monument a truthful one, *because he wrote it himself;* but this is certainly reasoning in a circle, and is not at all satisfactory, when it is made the test of any mere worldly fact.

In view of what has been universally known, and so often adverted to and commented upon in the public journals of the city and State for the last fifteen years, Mr. Williams' apparent ignorance of any "counter claim" to that of Mr. Nevins "till a recent date," is certainly remarkable, and not to be accounted for on any hypothesis creditable to his intelligence.

I do not intend to say anything unpleasant to the feelings of the Reverend gentlemen who have charged their consciences with the posthumous fame of Col. T. J. Nevins, and certainly nothing is further from my intention, than to cast a reflection upon their clerical character or the religious faith they so sincerely profess; but if Mr. Nevins is not entitled to the credit of inaugurating the free school system of this city, then neither his death, nor the character of his witnesses, nor the zeal of his religious friends, can justify the wrong which is being done to Mr. Pelton.

We might be more charitable and more generous, if in addition to the wrong of the monumental inscription, we did not *know* that the controversy had not been confined to the burial ground and the dead, but had been carried into the Board of Education by the friends of Mr. Nevins, and there resulted in depriving Mr. Pelton of his situation as a teacher.

2 The following are significant facts: On the afternoon of the 12th day of September, 1864, the Nevins Monument was furtively hurried to its destination in Lone Mountain Cemetery, and on the afternoon of the next day, while the monumental shaft is being forced into its position, to perform its dubious *role* in the disgraceful programme, the enemies of Mr. Pelton stealthily meet within the rooms of the Board of Education in secret inquisition; and, carefully excluding those members who would not become parties to the crime, they, then and there dealt the treacherous blow, designed, not only to rob Mr. Pelton's family of their daily bread, but to blast his professional reputation forever. The disclaimer of the Board of Education, to be found on page 22, is shallow and utterly futile—should we not say, utterly false!

Those resolutions, presented and urged through the Board of Education by Mr. Lynch, say—"nor did this Board aid in any manner in erecting said monument." What a statement is this! The Board of Education *did* "aid," and the School Fund almost *alone* secured the erection of "said Monument." Let their own Records testify:

In Board of Education, July 28th, 1863, (Book IV, page 325): "The Special Committee [of the Board of Education] to whom was referred the matter of the remains of Col. T. J. Nevins, recommended that the $700 be appropriated for the removal of the remains, the purchase of *a lot*, and the erection of *a monument!!*" "The recommendations *were adopted*—and power given to the committee to carry out recommendations."

"Eleven votes in the affirmative."

Payments in accordance with the above were made by the Board of Education from the *School Fund* as follows: Nov. 25th, 1863. "To N. Gray, for removal of remains, $125." Same date. "To Cemetery Co. *for Lot*," $139!!—March 2d, 1864, To John Grant, "*for Monument*," $386.!!!

Comment is unnecessary, when these resolutions of Mr. Lynch—the declarations of the Board of Education—and the above Records of said Board are thus brought face to face. They cannot escape the responsibility of their acts.

We believe Mr. Pelton has been grieviously wronged, and this pamphlet is given to an intelligent community as the means of undoing that wrong, and securing for him the just judgment of the people *for* whom and *with* whom he has so long and faithfully labored in the cause of education.

FRANK M. PIXLEY.

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Testimony of Early Residents.

San Francisco, June, 1884.

Gentlemen of Com. School Committee:

We, the undersigned, firmly believe that the credit of inaugurating the Free School System in San Francisco is due to our friend and esteemed citizen, John C. Pelton, Esq.

JNO. A. SUTTER,
[The eminent pioneer, a resident of California since 1839.]

O. M. WOZENCRAFT,
[Ex-U. S. Indian Agent.]

SAMUEL PURDY,
[Lieut.-Governor in 1852-6.]

THOS. SHILLABER,
[Formerly of U. S. Navy.]

HARVEY S. BROWN,
[Dist. Att'y in 1852-3.]

M. S. WHITING,
[State Senator in 1852-3.]

R. F. PERKINS,
[Post Master, San Francisco.]

E. M. JESSUP,
[City Council in 1851-2.]

MILO HOODLEY,
[Ex-City and County Surveyor.]

G. W. HOLLIDAY,
[Ex-City Attorney.]

E. S. DORR,
[Alderman in 1851.]

J. R. HARDENBERG,
[Ex-Mayor of Sacramento—now of San Francisco.]

J. SHORT,
[Deputy Sheriff.]

H. H. BYRNE,
[City Attorney in 1860-1.]

J. P. DYER,
[Ex-Mayor of Sacramento—now of San Francisco.]

J. M. BUFFINGTON,
[Ex-Mayor of Stockton—now of San Francisco.]

E. C. MOORE,
[Of firm of E. Gilbert & Co., Publishers Alta California, 1849.]

G. W. GREEN,
[Common Councilman in 1851.]

CHARLES L. WIGGINS,
[Mayor's Clerk, 1851.]

DAN LOUDERBACK,
P. S.—I was a pupil in Mr. Pelton's School, in 1849.
[Now Attorney in Police Court.]

J. H. HESSE,
[10 years on City Police.]

E. P. ROBINSON,
[Clerk Police Court.]

JAMES GRAVES,
[Of City Council in 1854.]

C. E. BUCKINGHAM,
[County Treasurer in 1851.]

H. F. WILLIAMS,
[Ex-Pres't Mechanics' Institute.]

WM. FAULKNER,
[Ed'r and Prop'r Pacific News 1849.]

Geo. L. FAULKNER,
[Of Pacific News in 1849.]

R. BRANGDON.

C. W. NICHOLS.

A. R. BIGGS.

A. C. BONNELL.

Wm. MURRAY.

JOHN C. WHITE.

J. B. BADGER.

G. C. HAYDEN.
[Resident since 1849.]

C. T. BALDWIN.
[Resident since June, 1849.]

T. H. HATCH.

CHAS. R. BARRY.

PETER H. WHEELER.

J. T. SANBORN.

J. S. FORWALD.

BENJ. D. ALMEY.
[Resident since 1849.]

E. P. CLARK.

Wm. NEIL.

Wm. H. JONES.

JOHN WHITE.

E. T. BURR.
[Mr. Pelton was the first teacher known to me as above, in Sept. 1851.]

Opening of the First Public School,

DECEMBER 26, 1849.

To the Citizens of San Francisco:

The subscriber proposes to establish in San Francisco, a *Free Public School.*

In order that the school may be free to all who may be disposed to avail themselves of its privileges, it is proposed to admit free of tuition all who may apply; no other compensation being required at present, than what the friends of the school and the public generally may be disposed to contribute.

It is also proposed, until better arrangements can be made, that the school consist of children and youth of both sexes and of the different ages that usually attend primary and more advanced schools, and that the course of study include those English branches taught in the Public Schools of New England.

The Baptist Chapel, situated on Washington street, has been generously tendered, and a sufficient sum guaranteed to conveniently fit the same for the uses of the proposed school.

The school will commence on Wednesday, the 26th inst.

Before leaving the States, the subscriber procured, at an expense of much time and pains, an ample supply of the most approved school books, with which those pupils who wish can be supplied at the school room.

The subscriber is permitted to refer to Mr. F. P. Fitts, Mr. Wm. W. Gallaer, Mr. Wm. Hooper, and the Rev. Mr. Wheeler.

The names of the Trustees will appear in a subsequent number of this paper.

J. C. PELTON.

March 28. In Council.—The following *resolution* [by Talbot H. Greene] was unanimously adopted:

"RESOLVED, That from the first day of April, A. D. 1850, John C. Pelton and Mrs. Pelton his wife, be employed as teachers for the Public School in the Baptist Church, which has been offered to the Council free of charge, and that the average number of scholars shall not exceed one hundred; and that they shall be entitled to a monthly salary, during the pleasure of the Council, of five hundred dollars per month, payable each and every month."

March 28th. In Council.—"On motion of Mr. Graham, the Committee on Education, were instructed to prepare an ordinance for the regulation of said [the above] school."

April 8th. In Council.—The Committee on Education reported an "ordinancefor the regulation of Common Schools," as follows:

1st. Be it ordained by the Common Council of San Francisco, That from and after the passage of this Act it shall be the duty of J. C. Pelton, who has been employed by the Council as a public teacher, to open a school in the Baptist Chapel.

2d. Said school shall be opened from half-past 8 A. M. to 12 M., and from 2 P. M. until 5 P. M., and shall continue open from Monday until Friday at 5 o'clock, P. M.

3d. The number of scholars shall not exceed the number of one hundred; and no scholar shall be admitted under the age of four, or over the age of sixteen.

4th. All persons desirous of having their children instructed in said school shall first obtain an order from the Chairman of the Committee on Education, and all children obtaining said order shall be instructed in said school free of charge.

5th. It shall be the duty of said Pelton to report to the Council on the first of each and every month the number of scholars and the progress of said school.

H. C. MURRAY.
F. TILFORD.

May 4th. In Council.—The report of J. C. Pelton, [the first Public School Report on record in this city,] was read and placed on file.

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